



Backgrounder

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DEA and Diversion: What You Should Know

[What is the DEA Diversion Control Program?](#)

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Office of Diversion Control:

- Has a specialized workforce focused exclusively on diversion and the laws and regulations of prescription drugs established through the Controlled Substances Act (CSA).
- Enforces the laws and regulations relating to the CSA, and regulates those who are registered to handle prescription drugs.
- Maintains an in-depth knowledge of the entire supply chain from importation, through production, to distribution of prescription drugs in the legitimate pharmaceutical market.

[What is the Problem?](#)

The diversion of pharmaceuticals is a growing problem in the United States, and the DEA is doing its part to respond to this threat, which includes the national takeback program scheduled to take place across America on Saturday, September 25th, 2010.

Quick Facts:

- Unintentional overdose deaths involving prescription opioids increased 175 percent between 2001 (3,944) and 2006 (11,001), the most recent year data is available.
- In 2008, there were 6.2 million Americans aged 12 years and older who abused prescription drugs* for non-medical purposes within the past month – more than the number of people who are abusing cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, and inhalants, *combined*.
- The economic costs of diversion and abuse of prescription drugs is steep. For example, the estimated cost to public and private medical insurers is \$72.5 billion a year.
- Prescription drug diversion often involves individuals who doctor-shop or forge prescriptions and unscrupulous physicians and pharmacists. It also has traditionally flourished over the Internet. However, it is estimated that up to 62 percent of teens get prescription medicines for non-medical use from family and friends homes and medicine cabinets.

*Prescription drugs refer to controlled substance pharmaceuticals controlled under federal law and enforced by the DEA.

[What Else is DEA Doing About Diversion?](#)

- **Nearly doubling the number of Special Agents assigned to diversion investigations** over the past two years, with additional Special Agents, Diversion Investigators and other prescription drug resources planned for FY 2011.
- **Establishing Additional Tactical Diversion Squads** made up of Special Agents, Diversion Investigators, state and local police officers, and other federal agencies. This task force concept has proven effective in taking on prescription drug traffickers around the country.
- **Using the tools given to DEA by Congress.** This includes the use of criminal prosecution, civil suits, and administrative actions against those who divert prescription drugs. For example:
 - Taking civil and administrative actions against manufacturers, distributors and retailers of prescription drugs who violate the CSA or its implementing regulations. In 2008, DEA took action against two large distributors that resulted in record-breaking civil fines.
 - Implementing The Ryan Haight Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act. This act makes it harder for cyber-criminals to illegally sell prescription drugs via the Internet and easier to prosecute them when they are caught.
 - Supporting the passage of legislation that will give the Attorney General and DEA the authority to authorize the “take back” of unused, unwanted, or expired controlled substance medications for proper disposal.
- **Developing important resources** to help explain the dangers of prescription drug abuse. This includes the websites GetSmartAboutDrugs.com for parents and JustThinkTwice.com for teens; a prescription drug guide “Prescription for Disaster: How Teens Abuse Medicine”; and the DEA traveling exhibit *Target America: Opening Eyes to the Damage Drugs Cause* which has been seen by nearly 10 million visitors. It opens in Tampa, Florida next spring.

[For Additional Information:](#)

For an electronic copy of the *2010 National Prescription Drug Threat Assessment* please go to the National Drug Intelligence Center at www.usdoj.gov/ndic/.

For more information on DEA's enforcement actions and DEA in the news, please go to www.dea.gov or www.dea.gov/diversion.

