

# An Ounce of Prevention...



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## Tennessee Makes Headway in Prescription Abuse Problem

According to an article by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, "the National Survey on Drug Use and Health shows a decline in the abuse of prescription pain relievers among Tennessee teenagers, ages 12-17 and young adults, ages 18-25." Among teenagers and young adults, the survey indicated a decrease in use of 25% in teens and as much as 28% for young adults.

Tennessee's overall ranking among the 50 states regarding teen prescription use has improved from 37th to 25th and among young adults from 45th to 26th.

This kind of improvement was not an accident. Tennessee's passage of the Prescription Drug Safety Act in 2012 was a major contributing factor. The Prescription Drug Safety Act requires doctors to register with and check the Controlled Substance Monitoring Database before prescribing opioids or benzodiazepine drugs into the Controlled Substance Database.

Another major factor in the decrease in use among teens is the collective effort of coalitions funded by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Coalitions across the state have taken direct action in their communities to reduce prescription drug use with initiatives like drug take back events, physician training events, and adding RX Drop Boxes where people can dispose of unwanted medications.

Although these efforts are noteworthy, Tennessee still has a problem. According to state figures, at least 1,263 Tennesseans died in 2014 from opioid overdoses. In the last 10 years, the state's rate of babies born addicted to drugs continues to increase and in 2011, TennCare paid "\$78 million in claims for people drug-related diagnoses."

So the fight continues. In June of 2016 the Prescription Drug Safety Act expires and lawmakers must make the decision to renew it. In addition, coalitions continue to need the public to get involved in events like January 2016's National Drug Facts Week. Find your local drug prevention coalition and spread the facts about opioid abuse and what can be done to stop it.



**It Only Makes Sense.**

**Tennessee REDLINE**  
Help for Substance Abuse  
**1-800-889-9789**



**Drop Box Locations: Smith County Sheriff's Office & Carthage City Police Department**

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