Heroin and Teens: A problem that starts in the medicine cabinet

For the past year we have been hearing more and more about the dangers of heroin use in the media. Many people think of this drug as something that is only used by “hard core drug addicts” and the stereotype that this phrase brings to mind. That stereotype has been proven to be a myth. People from all walks of life can be at risk for trying and becoming addicted to heroin. Teens are using heroin and dying from its use. The increase in heroin use has been linked to the increase in prescription medication abuse. Individuals are becoming addicted to prescription drugs such as painkillers. These medications are opioids, the same substance as heroin, and the medications can be very dangerous and addicting in their own right. When a person can no longer get more prescription drugs they find that heroin will fill the place of the pills and the pills’ addiction while being cheaper and sometimes easier to obtain that the prescription medications. For parents it probably seems easy to warn your child about the dangers of heroin (strong likelihood of addiction, physical illness and death) but remember that this prevention starts with warnings about the misuse of prescriptions drugs. Teach your teen to respect prescription medications:

* Use medication only when is it specifically prescribed by a doctor for you
* Use as directed and only for the duration the doctor specifies
* Appropriately dispose of all unused medications
* Know how much medication is left in the bottles and keep them locked away to avoid misuse/theft

If you have any concerns or questions please contact Marcy Weed, Prevention counselor, at [mweed@skanschools.org](mailto:mweed@skanschools.org)