



Prescription Drug Abuse



Tansi!

The Opaskwayak Health Authority (OHA) of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN) has recognized the need to address the issue of prescription drug abuse (PDA) in our communities. OHA has prepared this discussion guide to help you better understand prescription drug abuse, its impacts, and what we can do about it.

OHA's Vision on PDA:

We have a vision! We want to see: **Educated, safe, and empowered First Nation communities - free from the misuse of prescription drugs!**

It's that simple. If we educate ourselves about prescription drug abuse and what's going on in the community we will be better able to ensure our families and our communities are safe. JOIN US IN PROMOTING THIS VISION of a stronger and better future! Our children deserve it!

Who is affected by PDA?

- Sadly, more and more families are being impacted and affected by the abuse of prescription drugs
- It's not just our youth, it's also our older family members, including Elders
- We need to be aware that anyone can be impacted by PDA - especially families who suffer the consequences when a family member is lured into abusing prescription drugs and controlled by it

**The bottom line is this:
PDA knows no boundaries!**

What is Prescription Drug Abuse?

Prescription Drug Abuse has been defined in a variety of ways. Here are a few definitions:

"Prescribed medicines not used for their intended purposes..." OR, **"...the use of any prescription medication, which is not used in the prescribed dose or prescribed time interval than what was prescribed by one's doctor"**.

So basically, if a person is taking prescription drugs for any reason other than what is prescribed by a doctor then they are abusing these drugs or at risk of abusing them.

The prescription drugs most often abused include painkillers, sedatives, anti-anxiety medications and stimulants. For a more detailed explanation, please visit this website:

<https://www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction/commonly-misused-prescription-drugs>

Why Prescription Drugs are being Abused:

People take drugs because they want to change something about their lives. Teens and adults abuse prescription drugs for a number of reasons and have said it is to:

- Feel good or **"get high"**
- Numb traumatic experiences
- Be accepted by peers (peer pressure) or to be social - to fit in
- Cope with emotional or physical pain
- Escape or relax or relieve tension
- Relieve boredom
- Rebel or experiment
- Reduce appetite or increase alertness
- Experiment with the mental effects of the substance
- Maintain an addiction and prevent withdrawal
- Improve concentration and academic or work performance

How PDA is affecting First Nation communities:

- PDA is **breaking up** relationships first and foremost
- Family and community relationships are deteriorating more rapidly with the **misuse of pills**
- The level of **helplessness** is greater in many First Nation communities as the availability of prescription drugs become more widespread
- The use and misuse of prescription drugs can result in various harms to health, including addiction, withdrawal, injury and deaths related to road crashes, accidental overdoses and suicide; the financial and **human costs are huge**
- There are harms to society as well, including crime and victimization, **loss of human potential** and pressures on community and resources available for treatment and prevention

What can we do about PDA?

If you are aware of someone who is affected by PDA, it is best to **reach out to someone who can help** in the community. This may be an Elder, a Councillor or leader, a parent or teacher, health care provider or an addictions worker. The time to act is always now. If you delay, someone could be seriously harmed if they do not get the help they need.

Protect our Elders:

- Elders often have many different medications prescribed to them and we need to be aware that our Elders are being abused. Theft can occur right in an Elder's home. But if we can remove the opportunity for medications to be taken then we can reduce chances of Elders becoming victims of abuse
- In the home, Elders are sometimes more susceptible targets to medicine theft. Family or friends may steal pills often, and in some cases, the Elder is actually USED exclusively to get access to prescription drugs. This is criminal behaviour and a reportable offence
- Elders in the home may also be victimized by visitors to their residence, such as health workers, delivery people and home care workers
- Criminals may watch a home and notice additional traffic or hear that a resident has been ill, injured or hospitalized. They are looking for opportunities to steal prescription drugs
- The effects of drug theft can be a big problem because stolen prescription drugs fuel criminal activity. This breaks down individuals, families, and communities
- Criminals under the influence of stolen drugs are more likely to commit additional crimes, including violent actions



To report abuse, call your local police department or speak to your local health care authority!

What can you do to protect yourself or your loved ones?

- Obtain a lock box with a key for prescription drugs, which can be obtained at many retail stores
- Never give anyone the key to go get the medication from your lock box
- If a lock box is not available always keep your medications with you in your possession or stored in a safe place
- Never share your medications with anyone
- If someone asks you for pain medication tell them to consult their own physician or nurse
- Never discuss your medications with anyone unless they have a need to know your health status i.e., doctor, nurse
- Remove or mark out the labels when disposing of old medication bottles; this prevents anyone from knowing your medication type
- If you suspect that your medication has been stolen or tampered with, notify someone you trust

What can we do in our community to deal with PDA?

- Sit down and discuss PDA as a family
- Talk as a group in the community or at the school
- Use this pamphlet to start the discussion in families or in the community
- Hold a prescription drug abuse awareness day in the community
- Get your leaders to spread the message that we need to deal with PDA!

Let's find creative ways to keep talking about PDA and find solutions!

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS:

Local RCMP (204) 627-6200

Local Band Constable (204) 627-6242

After hours OCN Crisis Help Line (204) 623-0519

Aurora House Crisis Line (204) 623-5497

The Pas Hospital (204) 623-6431... Press 9

Opaskwayak Health Authority (204) 627-7410

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (204) 627-8140

Suicide Crisis Line 1-888-322-3019

**First Nations and Inuit Hope
for Wellness Help Line 1-855-242-3310**

**MKO Mobile Crisis 1-844-927-5433
crisisresponse@mkonorth.com**

OHA PDA website: www.oha-pda.ca



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**TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER
LET'S **STOP** PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE!**