

**Survey of Police and Teachers: Alcohol and Marijuana  
Most Serious Substance Abuse Facing Teens**

***Upcoming FDA Hearing on Abuse of Cough and Cold Medications Misses the Mark***

**New York (September 9, 2010)** – The Center for Medicine in the Public Interest released the results of a national Teen Substance Abuse survey today, indicating that police officers and high school teachers nationwide believe alcohol and marijuana are the most serious problem substances facing teenagers. These survey results come as the Food and Drug Administration has scheduled an Advisory Committee meeting for September 14 to examine whether abuse of cough and cold medications by teens requires stricter controls on the sale of those commonly used products.

Police and teachers polled do not believe it is a good idea to force Americans to visit a doctor to get a prescription to purchase commonly sold cough and cold medicines. However, an FDA Advisory Committee next week could decide to make more than 100 brand name, over-the-counter cold and cough medicines containing the ingredient dextromethorphan available only through a doctor’s prescription or place them behind the counter at pharmacies, forcing customers to receive assistance from a pharmacist or store employee to get the medicines.

When asked which substances pose the greatest negative impact on teens, teachers and police overwhelmingly identified marijuana and alcohol, followed by methamphetamine and cocaine. Additionally, no police and only 1% of high school teachers cited cough and cold medicines as having the greatest negative impact on teens.

<b>When you think of substance abuse, which substances do you see as having the greatest negative impact on teens?</b>	<b>Police</b>	<b>H.S. Teachers</b>
Alcohol//beer	51%	70%
Marijuana//pot	69%	51%
Prescription drugs//prescription pills	27%	15%
Methamphetamine//crystal methamphetamine	28%	9%
Cocaine//coke//crack	22%	8%
Heroin	12%	3%
Ecstasy	6%	5%
Cigarettes//tobacco	3%	6%
Inhalants//spray can fumes	3%	-
Over the counter medicine//non prescription medication	1%	2%
Cough//Medicines//Cold Medicines//DXM	-	1%

CMPI's study also shows that alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs, methamphetamine, cocaine and cigarettes are cited among the top substances posing the most serious problems to teens:

<b>% Selecting as Most/2<sup>nd</sup> Most/3<sup>rd</sup> Most Serious Problem Substance</b>	<b>Police</b>	<b>H.S. Teachers</b>
Alcohol	82%	88%
Pot	76%	75%
Prescription drugs	41%	27%
Meth	32%	22%
Cigarettes	14%	36%
Cocaine/Crack	27%	15%
Ecstasy	5%	9%
OTC cough and cold medicine	5%	8%

The survey also reveals that by a margin of two to one, police officers and high school teachers support education efforts as a means to address abuse of over-the-counter cough and cold medicines, versus restricted accessibility to consumers.

“Americans expect to be able to buy cough medicines conveniently at the supermarket or their neighborhood corner store,” says CMPI Vice President Robert Goldberg, PhD. “Overly restricting access to cough and cold products containing dextromethorphan will create more health problems than it will solve, especially during cold and flu seasons. We need to find common sense solutions and invest more resources in education.”

The entire Teen Substance Abuse survey is available at [www.cmpi.org](http://www.cmpi.org) and the poll was conducted by [Fabrizio Ward and Associates](http://www.fabrizio-ward.com).

**To schedule an interview with Bob Goldberg, CMPI Vice President, please contact Barb Cvrkel at [bcvrkel@dezenhall.com](mailto:bcvrkel@dezenhall.com) or 301.919.6669**

#### About CMPI

The Center for Medicine in the Public Interest is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and educational organization that seeks to advance the discussion and development of patient-centered health care.

#### About The Survey

This survey was conducted among a nationally representative sample of 200 High School Teachers and 200 Police. The data was collected August 18-30, 2010. All interviews were conducted by telephone, with police interviewed at police stations and teachers interviewed both at school and at home.

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