A RED FLAGS
For Opiate Abuse

- Money missing and seems unaccounted for: Mom thinks “I thought I had $10 left in my wallet; didn’t I have $10? Well, maybe I spent it.” YOU, THE PARENT, BEGIN TO QUESTION YOURSELF, YOUR MEMORY OF MONEY AND CIRCUMSTANCES

- Change (coins) missing from home - purse, change jar, etc.

- Small items missing and unaccounted for - jewelry, valuables, household items of resale quality

- Spoons may be missing from the kitchen; or appear blackened/burnt on the underside

- The user may steal your credit/debit card or checks (from the middle of the pack/out of sequence) - use fraudulently, and run up debt under your name; scrutinize your bank/card statements often for irregularities or unauthorized purchases

- Opiates are sedatives, “downers,” therefore they make the user very tired. User will begin to seem very dopey, fatigued, sleep much more than usual, sometimes to the point of being unable to wake; watch for episodes of “nodding off” while sitting, talking, eating, driving

- Opiate side effects: Eyes will reflect opiate usage - pupils are pinpoint and fixed - unresponsive to changes of light

- Opiate side effects: itchy skin, having the feeling and appearance of “skin crawling,” “cotton mouth” - speech is impaired and/or slurred, user constantly licks his lips and lips appear dysfunctional

- Be watchful of your child making FREQUENT and apparently unnecessary trips out of the house with all kinds of excuses: “get gas, cigarettes” “go grab a quick bite” “to drop something off/pick something up”. THESE ARE DRUG PICK-UPS/DROP OFFS

- Be watchful of your child having people stopping over FREQUENTLY or UNEXPECTEDLY and for only moments/short times; be watchful for a lot of people traffic on your property or in your home

- Opiate users will often wear sunglasses inappropriately - inside, nighttime, days which obviously do not warrant their wearing

- Appetite and weight will usually decrease drastically as opiate use becomes all consuming; the user progressively loses all interest in eating and drinking. Watch for: multiple bottles and glasses of water, often partially full

- User loses all interest in any recreational activity, including the opposite sex

- Personal hygiene suffers; user loses interest in showering, clean clothes, etc.

- Watch for evidence of constipation (opiate side effect) - laxatives, enemas, etc.

- Volatile, violent, angry behavior begins and escalates, especially if cornered, questioned, or disciplined; breaks house rules

- LYING!! ABOUT EVERYTHING; secretive behavior

- Most likely begins encounters with police, arrests

- Watch for time missed from school/work because of NOT being able to function - lethargic, always sleepy/dopey: this is user’s active use symptoms

- Watch for signs of ‘dope sick’ - this is the user’s attempt at getting clean/off opiates: symptoms are exactly like the flu, in varying degrees and can last for a day to a week. Be aware of time being missed from school/work because of these repeated “sick days”

Regarding SNORTING OPIATES:

- Watch for snorting paraphernalia, i.e. empty/disassembled pens, straws, rolled/folded dollar bills or pieces of paper

- Watch for: sinus congestion, sniffing, stuffy nose

Regarding I.V. Use:

- Users will have “track marks” - injection sites - on arms or other body parts; these will often be explained away as an “injury” - i.e., with a bandaid; or user will write over the site with pen/ink and say “it’s just a pen mark,” or get a tattoo over sites in effort to hide them. LADIES – watch for coverup makeup missing------may be taken by user to cover I.V. injection sites

- Users will usually wear long-sleeved clothing, to cover arms/track marks, even in the hottest weather/conditions

- Watch for burn holes in EVERYTHING!! shirts, pants, in bedroom, on furniture, in car, etc.

- Look for pinprick holes and blood stains on clothing: on shirt sleeves, cuffs, pants, inside of pants pockets

- Watch for blood spots/droplets anywhere in the house or in the car

- DO search the room, bags, cars, clothes for paraphernalia: needles/needle caps; tiny black elastic bands; hollowed-out or disassembled pens; straws; small empty baggies (clear or colored; wax, plastic or paper); alcohol prep pads or wrappers; cotton balls; small pieces of cotton fiber—like from a cigarette filter

Teen opiate abuse generally includes: prescription pills (Percocet, Vicodin, OxyContin) or heroin

Contact us at: parents4achange@yahoo.com