

Operation Trail-Mix



Law Enforcement Cracks Down on Prescription Drug Traffickers and Abusers

On April 12, DHCS investigators led a crackdown of people using illegally obtained or fake prescription pads. Four people—all from El Cajon—were arrested for burglary, forging or altering a prescription, and possession/possession for sale of a controlled substance, among other charges.

Fifteen people were arrested and cash, drugs and weapons confiscated during a two-day crack down on prescription drug traffickers and abusers.

San Diego County Probation, with assistance from the Sheriff's Office, District Attorney, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Marshalls, San Diego Police Department, Chula Vista Police Department, National City Police Department and investigators from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) conducted Operation Trail Mix, a countywide sweep of people using fake prescription pads and probationers with a history of selling or abusing prescription drugs.

"Prescription drug abuse is becoming a big problem in the region and across the nation," said Mack Jenkins, Chief Probation Officer. "Our goal is to make sure our probationers are complying with the orders of the court, following the law and not trafficking or abusing prescription drugs."

County probation officers, assisted by other law enforcement personnel, visited the homes of 52 probationers who have a history of prescription drug abuse or have been involved in "doctor shopping."

Eleven people were arrested for probation violations, including three which have new charges pending. More than \$3,000 in cash was confiscated, as well as various prescription drugs, cocaine, marijuana, and heroin and drug paraphernalia. Additionally, two replica firearms were seized.

The primary focus was compliance and education; officers provided each household with educational information on prescription drug abuse.

"The confiscated drugs could have easily fallen into the wrong hands and led to abuse, addiction or worse – death," said County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, who also chairs the Prescription Drug Task Force, created two years ago to combat prescription drug abuse in the region. "It takes a coordinated effort to keep these easy-to-get drugs away from people. I am delighted to see the great collaboration taking place to combat prescription drug abuse and to protect children, families and communities."



"Prescription drug fraud is a real threat to the state's health care resources," said Toby Douglas, director of the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). "The joint operation today shows the mutual strong commitment of state, county and federal partners to prevent fraud and bring those who commit crimes to justice."

Abuse of prescription drugs—pain relievers, tranquilizers, sedatives and stimulants—has become increasingly prevalent among teens and young adults. Abuse of prescription pain killers now ranks second—only behind marijuana—as the nation's most prevalent illegal drug problem, according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

One in four teens who have been arrested in San Diego County admitted misusing prescription drugs in their lifetime, according to a SANDAG study of juveniles arrested in 2009.

In addition to the creation of the Prescription Drug Task Force, the County installed prescription drug drop-off boxes at 22 Sheriff's substations, and created a Prescription Drug Abuse Hotline at (877) 662-6384.

Several take back events have netted nearly four tons of prescription drugs. Sheriff's personnel estimate the 22 drop-off boxes will collect about 5,000 pounds of prescription drugs annually.

The prescription drug take back event, led by the DEA, was held nationwide on Saturday, April 30. For more information, visit www.dea.gov or please call the San Diego Division of the Drug Enforcement Agency at (858) 616-4100.