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NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

Bill Aims to Reduce Teen Abuse of Cough Syrup

Two senators introduced a bill designed to prevent the abuse of cough syrup by teenagers.

The bill restricts the sale of products containing the cough syrup ingredient dextromethorphan (DXM) to those older than 18, *Drug Store News* reports.

Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania and Senator Lisa Murkowski of Arkansas sponsored the measure, known as the Preventing Abuse of Cough Treatments (PACT) Act of 2012.

The PACT Act also places limits on the purchase of bulk (unfinished) DXM, so that only manufacturers registered with the Food and Drug Administration or relevant state agencies have access to DXM in its raw form. Currently, there are no national restrictions on sales or purchase of DXM in this form.

The 2011 Monitoring the Future survey found that 5 percent of teens report abusing cough medicine. Abuse of DXM can cause hallucinations, confusion, blurred vision and loss of motor control.

The Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) notes that DXM is a safe and effective cough suppressant found in more than 100 cough and cold medicines. The legislation "will give parents an additional tool to prevent abuse, while ensuring access for the millions of adults and families who responsibly use products containing DXM to relieve cough symptoms," CHPA President and CEO Scott M. Melville said in a news release.

"By addressing easy access to purchasing cough syrup for teens, the main cause of the harmful trend of its abuse, my bill will help keep our children safe and lessen the strain cough syrup abuse has put on families, hospitals and law enforcement," Senator Casey said in a statement. "My common-sense legislation will prevent kids from purchasing a drug that has dangerous consequences when abused to get high, while also ensuring it is available to those with a legitimate need for it."

To learn more about Alcohol, Drugs and Youth, click here.