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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Take Meds Seriously” Launches

New statewide campaign advocates safe use, storage and disposal of prescription drugs in Colorado

DENVER – Colorado is addressing the growing problem of the abuse of prescription medicine with a new public awareness campaign, “Take Meds Seriously.” Governor John Hickenlooper announced the education effort in a news conference at the University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy on the Anschutz Medical Campus today. The campaign is aimed at reducing prescription drug abuse and misuse in the state.

Grim statistics and recent surveys reveal how pervasive prescription drug misuse and abuse is in Colorado. Thirty-five Coloradans died a month in 2013 from unintentional drug overdoses. Nearly 224,000 Coloradans misuse prescription drugs each year. At least a third of Coloradans surveyed admitted using medicine prescribed for someone else. One in six of Colorado’s 12th graders have taken prescription medicine that was not written for them. And Coloradans admit at least half their households have drugs that are unused or out of date.

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"Take Meds Seriously" features a new website, TakeMedsSeriously.org, along with statewide advertising and public outreach efforts. Gov. Hickenlooper focused on the problem by convening the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention in 2013. The public awareness effort is an outgrowth of that Consortium's work to bring attention to the issue.

"Colorado ranks 12th in the nation for abuse and misuse of prescription drugs," said Hickenlooper. "This campaign is just one part of a coordinated, statewide strategy that simultaneously restricts access to prescription drugs for illicit use, while ensuring access for those who legitimately need them. The messages and tools provided through this effort will help us take on this serious public health challenge, as part of our commitment to becoming the healthiest state in the nation."

"The Colorado Attorney General's Office is proud to have contributed \$1 million in seed money to support the Consortium's work," said Attorney General Cynthia Coffman. "It is fitting that funds from settlements with major pharmaceutical companies to resolve charges of misconduct are now being spent to combat Colorado's prescription drug abuse problem."

[A 2014 survey](#) conducted for the Consortium by National Research Center, Inc., found four in 10 Colorado adults say they've misused prescription medicine, mostly painkillers, and a third of those adults used the medicine for recreational purposes. Few Coloradans lock and store their medicine in places children can't access it, and only one in 10 had returned expired medicine to a police or sheriff's department. Those surveyed expressed strong support for increased state funding in education to address the problem, as well as resources to deal with the "take-back" of drugs by law enforcement agencies.

The new campaign is an integral part of the Governor’s *Colorado Plan to Reduce Prescription Drug Abuse*, which, in keeping with its commitment to making Colorado the healthiest state in the nation, has set the goal of preventing 92,000 Coloradans from engaging in the non-medical use of prescription pain medication by 2016. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) will assist the consortium with a coordinating role in the campaign.

Hickenlooper was co-chairman of the National Governors Association’s efforts, along with Alabama Governor Robert Bentley, to create awareness and regulatory mechanisms to fight the prescription drug abuse problem in the states.

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About the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention:

The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention (Consortium) was created by Governor John Hickenlooper in the fall of 2013 to establish a coordinated, statewide response to this problem. The Consortium’s mission is to reduce the abuse and misuse of prescription drugs in Colorado through improvements in education, public outreach, research, safe disposal and treatment.

The Consortium serves as a backbone, providing infrastructure to link the many agencies, organizations, health professions, associations, task forces and programs that are addressing the prescription drug abuse problem. It’s housed at the CU Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Colorado Anschutz Campus and coordinated by Professor Robert Valuck, PhD, RPh. The Consortium includes experts from the Anschutz Medical Campus health professional schools and colleges and leaders from key agencies and organizations in Colorado.

Visit TakeMedsSeriously.org for more information.