Leadership Discussion Guide

Prescription for Discharge Leadership Discussion Guide 2018

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Navy Drug Use Policy

Navy and Marine Corps drug use policies explicitly prohibit wrongful use of prescription drugs and require Sailors and Marines with legitimate prescriptions to self-report so that they can be validated during the drug testing process. The Navy’s drug use policy states:

- Navy members shall never wrongfully possess, distribute or abuse drugs, be in possession of drug abuse paraphernalia, or be under the unauthorized influence of prescribed drugs.

- Drug abuse includes the wrongful use of controlled substance analogues, such as designer drugs, illicit use of anabolic steroids, and the wrongful use of prescription and/or over-the-counter drugs and medications.

- Members shall report all prescription medications received from non-military Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs) within 10 days to their chain of command and ensure they are entered into their military health record.

- Members who self-report as positive for prescription drugs and have a legitimate prescription may be retained on active duty, provided commands submit a request to NADAP that explains why the positive urinalysis is not a drug abuse incident.

- Navy’s drug abuse policy supersedes any foreign, state, or local ordinance that permits the use, possession, distribution or prescription of a controlled substance.

- For more information, see OPNAVINST 5350.4D (04 June 2009).
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Issues & Solutions

In recent years, the definition of drug use has expanded to include the misuse of prescription drugs, or the use of prescription medications for nonmedical reasons or in ways not prescribed by a physician. Although prescription drugs are a legal, safe method of treating injury and illness when taken as prescribed by a physician, improper use is both illegal and dangerous—and in some cases deadly.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), prescription drugs are misused and abused more than any other substance, except marijuana and alcohol. The growth of prescription drug misuse and abuse can be attributed in part to increasing availability and misperceptions about prescription medication safety. 1

The Navy and Marine Corps are not immune to this issue.

Drug use puts Sailors’ and Marines’ lives and missions at risk, undercuts unit readiness and morale, and is inconsistent with the Navy and Marine Corps’ ethos and core values of honor, courage and commitment. The Navy’s zero tolerance policy on illicit drug abuse has resulted in an overall steady decline over the past decade of the use of illegal drugs such as marijuana, cocaine and heroin. However, at the same time, the use of prescription drugs is on the rise, increasing the potential for misuse.

About NADAP’s Prevention Campaign

Between 2013 and 2016, Navy urinalysis testing revealed a 31.4% increase in the number of amphetamine positives.

Prescription For Discharge

Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention (NADAP), part of the Navy’s 21st Century Sailor Office (OPNAV N17), developed the “Prescription for Discharge” campaign to educate Sailors, Marines and their family members on the safe and proper use of prescription drugs. Support from every level of Navy leadership is vital to this initiative.

Leadership can serve as advocates for prescription drug safety by taking the following steps:

**Educate**
Educate your Sailors and Marines on the proper use of prescription drugs and the health and safety risks of misuse.

**Engage**
Engage your drug abuse prevention personnel to stay aware of prescription drug related issues and policies.

**Leadership**
Lead by example by modeling proper use and disposal tactics for prescription drugs as appropriate.

**Consistency**
Be consistent in your message and vigilant in the reinforcement of Navy policies related to prescription drugs.

For more information, materials and resources, visit the Prescription for Discharge campaign website at [www.nadap.navy.mil](http://www.nadap.navy.mil).
The Prescription for Discharge campaign tagline, “Zero Tolerance. Infinite Risk,” is meant to provide Sailors and Marines with a direct message that the Navy and Marine Corps have a zero tolerance policy for prescription drug abuse and that misusing prescription drugs puts both their career and health at severe risk.

Sailors and Marines associate the term “zero tolerance” with the risk of losing their careers. It is important that they fully understand the Navy and Marine Corps policy on prescription drug use and that misusing it can lead to disciplinary action.
Assisting in Education

This discussion guide is meant to assist deck plate and senior leaders in their efforts to educate Sailors and Marines on the safe and proper use of prescription medications, what constitutes prescription drug misuse and the consequences associated with abusing prescription drugs. The topics and associated talking points are intended to provide you with accurate, up-to-date, and accessible messages to share with all Navy and Marine Corps personnel regarding prescription drug misuse.

Messaging to Sailors and Marines

- If you find yourself wanting or needing to take more than the prescribed dosage of your medication, speak to a doctor immediately. Never take it upon yourself to decide how much or for how long you should be taking a prescription medication. Increasing the dose yourself could put you on a fast track to career consequences, addiction, overdose, or even death.

- If you receive a prescription from a medical provider outside of the Navy, you must report it to your primary care provider within ten days. Also, if you’re called in for urinalysis, tell your command urinalysis coordinator at the time of testing, so that all of your prescriptions are documented in the event of a positive test.

- Most people who have reported misusing prescription medications say they got the drugs from a family member or a friend. If a shipmate asks if they can take some of your medication, encourage them to see a doctor. Sharing your medicine is illegal and just as serious of an offense as taking the drugs yourself without a prescription.

- You’ve worked hard to get where you are in your military career. Understand the rules around prescription drugs and make sure your shipmates and family members understand, too.
Four Steps for Proper Use of Prescription Drugs

As leaders, it is important to remind Sailors and Marines of the four steps to properly use and safely dispose of their prescription medications:

1. Take Correctly  ➔ Follow the doctor’s orders and prescription instructions as directed.

2. Report Promptly  ➔ Ensure that both Navy Medical and your command are aware of your current prescriptions. Report prescriptions received from non-military providers within 10 days.

3. Dispose Properly  ➔ Place unused meds in a small plastic bag with an undesirable substance (e.g., kitty litter or used coffee grounds) and throw the bag in the trash. Cross out personal information on your prescription labels.

4. Never Share  ➔ Never share your prescriptions with a friend, shipmate, or family member.

Options for Proper Disposal

At-Home Disposal Kit

To dispose of unused or expired medication at home, empty the contents into a small plastic bag mixed with water and an undesirable substance (such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds). Use a dark marker to cross out personal information on the bottle. Throw the bag and bottle in the trash.

Print the campaign’s At-Home Disposal Kit inserts and have them available in high-traffic areas and work with local providers to ensure that they’re available in those settings as well.

Drop Box Disposal

The Military Health System has established a year-round drug take-back program, offering secure drop boxes at military treatment facilities (MTFs) across the U.S. and in U.S. territories. Navy locations include Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, Naval Hospital San Diego and Navy Hospital Jacksonville. Drop boxes provide safe, convenient and anonymous disposal of unwanted, unused or expired prescription medications. Eligible medications include narcotics, non-controlled and controlled substance prescriptions, and over-the-counter (non-prescription) drugs.
Messaging to Sailors and Marines

> Disposing of your expired, unused or unwanted prescription drugs can minimize the risk of future misuse. Many military treatment facilities offer prescription drug drop boxes where people can securely and anonymously turn in unused or expired medications. Check with your MTF to see if one is located near you.

> Did you know flushing your unused or expired medication down the toilet can send harmful chemicals into our waterways?

If you don’t have access to an approved medication drop box, here’s a simple way to safely dispose: Remove the medication from its container and place in a plastic, zippered baggie along with an undesirable substance like kitty litter or used coffee grounds. Use a dark marker to cross out personal information on the container. Throw the baggie and the original container into the trash.

> I’m sure some of you have been in situations where you don’t feel like you need to use all the medication prescribed to you. However, it’s best to clarify with your doctor if and when you should stop taking your medication.

For example, it can be particularly bad to prematurely stop taking an antibiotic. Always talk with your doctor about how long you should be taking a medication, and when it’s okay to dispose of the unused drugs.
Messaging Year-Round

Work with your local Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor (DAPA), Health Promotion Coordinator or other local advocate to share information with Sailors and Marines. Place posters and graphics in high-traffic areas (including passageways and bathroom stalls). The Prescription for Discharge campaign offers a wide selection of graphics which can be downloaded from www.flickr.com/photos/nadap_usnavy/. Pair these graphics with messaging on social media and in your command’s plan of the week to further engage Sailors on an ongoing basis.

For additional sample messages for each month of the year, visit www.nadap.navy.mil.
## Sample Messages

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| **Jan.** | Happy New Year!  
Start the year off right by cleaning out your medicine cabinet. If you have any unused or expired medication, you can dispose of them by dumping them into a small plastic bag with water and used coffee grounds or another undesirable substance and throwing the bag in the trash. Cross out all personal information from the prescription label before recycling the bottle to protect your identity.  
For more tips, visit [www.nadap.navy.mil](http://www.nadap.navy.mil). |
| **Apr.** | Got unused, expired or unwanted prescription drugs? You can dispose of them safely, securely and anonymously by participating in National Take-Back Day.  
To find the nearest participating site or local MTF drop box available year-round, visit [https://go.usa.gov/xRzRr](https://go.usa.gov/xRzRr). |
| **Sep.** | Research shows that those who use prescription drugs for non-medical purposes are at increased risk of depression and thoughts of suicide.  
If you’re struggling with thoughts of suicide, call the [Military Crisis Line](https://www.namすこと khả行のとは) at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1).  
For confidential support for prescription drug misuse, you can also speak with a Navy chaplain. |
| **Oct.** | The Navy’s zero tolerance policy for substance abuse includes the misuse of prescription medications. Pain relievers are the most commonly abused prescription drugs.  
To protect your health and your career follow these four steps:  
For more info, visit [www.nadap.navy.mil](http://www.nadap.navy.mil). |