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## **Castro Valley forum to address prescription drug abuse among youths**

By Kristofer Noceda  
The Oakland Tribune

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CASTRO VALLEY — The Castro Valley Community Action Network on Tuesday will launch the first of a three-part series of informational meetings regarding substance abuse in youths.

Tuesday's workshop will address prescription-drug abuse.

"I do not think parents or even teenagers realize just because you have been prescribed (medicine), it does not mean you can abuse it," project Director Traci Cross said.

This past school year, two high school students were expelled from the district for prescription-drug abuse, said Leslie Rothwell, director of pupil services.

One student was in possession of Vicodin that he was using.

The other student brought his father's cough syrup with codeine to school. He was planning to sell the medicine to another student for \$10, Rothwell said.

The school district's drug policy states that any medications students must bring onto campus be kept and stored in the campus medical office.

State education code also has a zero tolerance for students "in possession of a controlled substance," Rothwell said.

Students caught with a controlled substance on campus get a mandatory recommendation for expulsion.

"This is a huge consequence," Rothwell said. "It is really important for parents and kids to know how serious it is."

The Community Action Network began promoting awareness of substance abuse in November by placing a billboard on Castro Valley Boulevard near Strobridge Avenue.

Officials followed up in December with postcards mailed to 3,500 families enrolled in the district and Redwood Christian schools. The mailings provided data showing a rising national trend in substance abuse among youths.

"Children as young as 12 are using prescription drugs nonmedically to get high or for 'self-medicating,' " Cross said. "Together, we can significantly change these statistics by educating parents and others in the Castro Valley community about the extent of the problem, and offering solutions to reduce the amount of prescription drugs students have access to in Castro Valley homes."

One strategy is to hold a take-back event later this year.

Cross is working with the sanitary district and the sheriff's office to hold a program in which residents can turn in prescription and other medicine no longer needed.

Tuesday's forum will be held at the Castro Valley High School Student Union, 19400 Santa Maria Ave. The guest speaker will be Rochelle Collins of Project Eden of Hayward, which offers substance-abuse treatment services.

The series will continue Feb. 24, when Barbara Stagers discusses teenage depression. The forum also will be held at the student union. Stagers heads the adolescent medicine department at Children's Hospital Oakland.

The final program, a seminar on alcohol and the teenage brain, will be held March 23 at the Castro Valley High School Center for the Arts. It will feature Aimee Souza of Axis Community Health.

All forums will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

For more information, visit [www.cvcn.net](http://www.cvcn.net).

Kristofer Noceda covers Cal State East Bay, Chabot College, Castro Valley, San Lorenzo and other unincorporated communities in the greater Hayward area. Contact him at 510-293-2479. Follow him at [Twitter.com/Noceda\\_Reports](https://twitter.com/Noceda_Reports).

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- WHAT: Informational forum on prescription-drug abuse among youths
- WHEN: 7 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday
- WHERE: Castro Valley High School Student Union, 19400 Santa Maria Ave., Castro Valley
- MORE INFO: Visit [www.cvcn.net](http://www.cvcn.net)