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Protect Your Loved Ones Secure Medications & Dispose of them Properly

By: Attorney General Leonardo M. Rapadas

April 18, 2014- Tamuning, Guam- When there are babies and young children in our homes, most of us know to put away cleaning materials or lock cabinets that hold chemical-based supplies. It is a precautionary measure that we take because we are aware that it could be harmful to our young loved ones and that they have not yet learned that it could be potentially dangerous.

As children grow older, they begin to understand that certain things can harm them- they learn that the stove is hot and can burn them and they learn that certain kitchen tools and equipment can injure them.

As parents and adults, we again take precautionary measures to protect growing children from harmful and dangerous situations and things as best we can. Children and young adults may know what Tylenol is and that it helps with fever, but they may not know that if they consume too much, it could be fatal. They may know that certain medications help with pain, but they may not know that when mixed together, they put themselves at risk of serious harm or death. It is our responsibility to protect them from potentially dangerous situations and to provide guidance. Guidance also includes the proper use of medication; we must take the time to educate them.

It is also equally important that we dispose of medicine no longer used or that have expired. A few years ago, the “pharm party” phenomena broke out and quickly spread throughout the United States; soon Guam followed. This caught the attention of law enforcement and parents. We, as parents, law enforcement, and citizens of our Island community, were not only confronted by the dangers of illicit or illegal drug use, but also from the access to and misuse and abuse of legally prescribed medications or drugs. It made protecting our children and youth more difficult. We can still take precautionary measures- we can make it difficult for them to access it- by properly disposing of medication we aren’t using or locking medicine cabinets that hold medication taken on a daily or long term basis.

The good news is our children are getting the message and turning away from illegal drugs. The bad news is they are turning to our medicine cabinets. We must continue our vigilance. We cannot let a success uncover a hidden failure.

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The Office of the Attorney General and other Attorney General Offices around the nation are partnering with other state, local and federal agencies, such as the Drug Enforcement Administration and the United States Attorneys Offices to get the word out.

We must engage in more prevention education. We must further our efforts in safety measures to control access to medication. We must properly dispose of such medications and drugs in a timely manner. Don't let prescribed drugs or medications in your home endanger your children or family!

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