

CPYU Trend Alert: **Drug Marketing Efforts** by Chris Wagner

Drug dealers know the key to making more money is getting more people to use their drug of choice. Being young, impressionable, and having plenty of disposable income, teens, tweens and even children are an easy target. Most drugs are so addictive dealers know they only have to get kids to experiment once to become hooked. In an effort to tap into this younger crowd with the hopes of finding lifetime users, drug dealers have begun using creative ways to market drugs specifically to children and teens. Two of these methods have made recent headlines.

The first example is a form of heroin known as "cheese." The Office of National Drug Control Policy describes cheese as "a combination of black tar heroin and ground up cold medicine (Tylenol PM) containing acetaminophen and diphenhydramine [an antihistamine]. The mixture is a tan powder that is snorted." What makes cheese common as a starter drug among children and teens is its low price tag of \$2 per hit or only \$10 per gram. At this price, cheese is affordable to anybody looking to experience a high (or low). It is sold in small plastic baggies or makeshift paper bindles and resembles the look of parmesan cheese, the most likely origin of its street name. The low price can fool teens into believing this drug isn't dangerous. However, there have been 21 deaths attributed to the use of cheese heroin since 2005 in the Dallas, Texas area alone. The cold medicine can combine with the effects of heroin to cause the central nervous system to slow down so much that the heart stops, resulting in death. The Dallas Police Department lists the following as other possible symptoms:

- Drowsiness
- Lethargy
- Euphoria
- Excessive thirst
- Disorientation
- Sleepiness and hunger
- Sudden change in grades and friends

Drug dealers are also trying to market the drug methamphetamine to a younger crowd by flavoring and coloring it with candies or drink mixes. Drug Enforcement Administration spokesman Steve Robertson says "Drug traffickers are trying to lure in new customers, no matter what their age, by making the meth seem less dangerous." A current popular cut is often referred to as "Strawberry Quick" and is pink in color. Authorities say producing it in this fashion makes it more appealing to potential first-time users by adding flavor to an otherwise bitter drug. It can also reduce the burning sensation felt when snorting. Other flavors, such as chocolate, have also been reported. Though drug raids have substantiated the claims of colored meth, it is often disputed whether or not the taste of the drug is actually altered. Regardless, methamphetamine marketed to teens is a serious concern that parents need to be aware of. CPYU reported on methamphetamine use in a previous Trend Alert. You can learn more about this dangerous drug by reading the article titled *Totally "methed" up* on our website at: <http://www.cpyu.org/Page.aspx?id=88844>.

Parents, make your children and teens aware of these new drug trends. It's important to have discussions about drugs with them at a very early age. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reports that eating meals together as a family and attending religious activities are "the two most protective factors for teens" in the combat against drug abuse. And of course, we can never forget to pray for our teens, that they would be able to stand up in the face of temptation.

**For more information on today's youth culture, visit the website of the
Center for Parent/Youth Understanding at
www.cpyu.org.**