
“RED FLAG” Signs of Prescription Drug Abuse

The State Medical Board of Ohio has developed a list of “Red Flag” signs of prescription drug abuse. You can often identify signs of potential drug-seeking behavior if you LOOK, LISTEN, and CHECK.

LOOK

There are visible signs of drug-seeking behavior. **LOOK** for the following red flags from patients:

- Appearing impaired or overly sedated during an office visit or exam
- Traveling with a group of other patients to the physician's office where all or most of the patients request controlled substance prescriptions
- Traveling an abnormally long distance to the physician's office

LISTEN

When you are talking to patients, **LISTEN** for the following red flags of drug-seeking behavior:

- Comments that indicate they may be taking medication that was not prescribed to them
- Comments about sharing their prescription medications with friends or family members
- References to drugs by street name, color, or identifying marks
- Reports of lost prescriptions for controlled medications, or excessive / routine requests for early refills
- Refusing to participate in a drug screen
- Comments that indicate that the patients may have been arrested or convicted for crimes involving prescription drugs, such as forging prescriptions or selling prescription drugs

CHECK

As part of your review of patient charts, medical history and OARRS report, **CHECK** for the following red flags of drug-seeking behavior:

- Drug screen results that are inconsistent with drugs on the treatment plan
- Receiving abused drugs from multiple prescribers, without clinical basis
- Recurring visits to non-coordinated sites of care, such as emergency departments, urgent care facilities, or walk-in clinics to obtain reported drugs
- A known history of chemical abuse or dependency, or illegal drug use
- Frequently requesting early refills of reported drugs
- Frequently losing prescriptions for reported drugs

For the full list of prescription drug abuse red flags, and for more information on the State of Ohio's efforts to curb drug abuse, please visit the State Medical Board of Ohio's website at:

www.med.ohio.gov