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September 20, 2012

MADIGAN'S OFFICE HOSTS TELECONFERENCES TO INFORM PARENTS & EDUCATORS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan invites parents and educators to learn more about the dangerous rise of synthetic drugs during two teleconferences next week with medical experts and law enforcement agencies that are helping communities respond to the increased use of substances such as K2, Spice, Incense and bath salts, particularly among teens and young adults.

Presenters from the Adams County Sheriff's Office and the Illinois Poison Center will join Madigan's staff for "Synthetic Drugs – What Parents Need to Know" in two teleconferences on Sept. 26-27.

"The spread of synthetic drugs has caught families and communities off guard," Madigan said. "Because teens could buy these little packets of powder or herbs at their local convenience store, many assumed they were safe and legal to use. But nothing could be further from the truth. We're hosting these calls for parents and educators so they can arm themselves with information to speak with their teens about the extreme dangers these drugs pose."

The free 60-minute trainings will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 26 at 11:30 a.m. and repeated on Sept. 27 at 7:30 p.m. The trainings will include an overview of synthetic drugs, the applicable laws and the ongoing efforts by local law enforcement. Parents, teachers and school officials are especially encouraged to attend.

To register for the teleconference and receive materials for use during the teleconference, please contact Eileen Baumstark-Pratt, Special Events Coordinator, by email at SpecialEvents@atg.state.il.us, telephone 866-376-7215 or by fax at 312-814-8344. For questions regarding the teleconference, please call Cara Smith, Deputy Chief of Staff, at 312-814-5526.

Legislation drafted by Madigan's office was signed into law earlier this summer which amended the Illinois Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act to target the retail sale of synthetic drugs. The new law addresses the fact that synthetic drugs are packaged with misleading labels designed to give the impression that the products are legal and "not intended for human consumption."

The new law defines a "synthetic drug product" as any product containing a controlled substance not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The law makes it a Class 2 felony, punishable by three to seven years in prison and a \$100,000 first offense fine to sell or possess with intent to distribute any form of synthetic drug products in Illinois. The law also significantly increases the penalty for selling or possessing with intent to distribute any drug that is misleadingly labeled, making it a Class 2 felony.

These trainings and the legislative initiative are part of Attorney General Madigan's ongoing work with local police and county sheriffs throughout the state to address the growing use of synthetic drugs, particularly among teens and young adults.

In December 2011, Madigan launched retail store sweeps, known as "Operation Smoked Out," shortly after hosting the state's first emergency summit to increase awareness of synthetic drugs. Since the retail store visits began, store owners across the state have relinquished more than 31,000 packages of synthetic drugs with a street value of almost \$689,000. In June, Madigan hosted a joint meeting with the Indiana Attorney General and law enforcement leaders from both states to share information gathered and strategies used to combat these drugs. And last month, investigators from Madigan's office participated in the first-ever coordinated nationwide crackdown on synthetic drugs.

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