

July 13, 2007

<b>DIRECTIVE:</b>	<b>JOB CORPS INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 07-01</b>
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**TO:** ALL JOB CORPS NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF  
ALL JOB CORPS REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF  
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS  
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER OPERATORS  
ALL NATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT CONTRACTORS  
ALL OUTREACH, ADMISSIONS, AND CTS CONTRACTORS

**FROM:** ESTHER R. JOHNSON, Ed.D.  
National Director  
Office of Job Corps

**SUBJECT:** Food and Drug Administration Proposes Update to Warnings About Suicidal Thinking and Behavior in Young Adults Who Take Antidepressant Medications

1. Purpose. To advise Job Corps centers and health care providers about the latest update to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advisory regarding antidepressants.
2. Background. On May 2, 2007, the FDA proposed that makers of all antidepressant medications update the existing black box warning to include warnings about increased risks of suicidality in young adults ages 18 to 24, especially during initial treatment (generally the first 1 to 2 months). Suicidality includes suicidal thinking and behavior. This warning applies to the entire category of antidepressant medications. A complete listing of these medications is included in the FDA news release, available at <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2007/NEW01624.html>.
3. Action. Antidepressant therapy should only be undertaken after careful consideration of the risks and benefits. This careful consideration should include a discussion of the recent FDA warning with the student and, if the student is a minor, his or her parents/guardians. It is strongly recommended that centers and center health staff do the following:
  - a. When possible, consult with, or refer to, psychiatry providers who specialize in caring for adolescents and young adults before initiating antidepressant therapy.

- b. Inform students and their parents/guardians, if applicable, of indicators of a negative reaction to these medications—any suicidal thoughts or behaviors, or an increase in agitation, restlessness, irritability, etc., that does not subside in a few days.
- c. Train all center staff on the possible negative reactions to antidepressant medications and how to identify students at risk for suicidal behavior. The center physician, center mental health consultant, or an outside community provider can conduct this training.
- d. Carefully document in the student's health record that *informed consent* was obtained following a discussion of the risks and benefits of the treatment proposed, as well as alternatives to this treatment, including doing nothing; that questions were answered; that the student/parent/guardian agreed to go ahead with the proposed treatment; and the current assessment of suicidal risk.
- e. Once a student begins antidepressant therapy, the FDA recommends, and center staff should have, *at least weekly* face-to-face contact with the student during the first 4 weeks of treatment, biweekly visits for the next 4 weeks, and as clinically indicated beyond 12 weeks. These visits should be documented in the student's health record.
- f. For students already on antidepressants, a qualified center health professional should discuss the FDA findings with them. A joint decision about continuing or changing antidepressant therapy should be made. The decision should be documented in the student's health record along with the informed consent outlined above. Note that most students who respond positively to antidepressant medications need to remain on the medication for at least 6 months before trying to go off the medication, or the depression symptoms may return.

Students and applicants to Job Corps who are taking antidepressants should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, relying in large part on the opinion of the prescribing physician or the wellness staff. If a student's individual circumstances or recent history indicate that he or she is in need of treatment but may not be a good candidate for antidepressant therapy, then a center may apply different or more restrictive actions than those outlined in this Information Notice. Such action might include a medical separation with reinstatement rights, to begin antidepressant therapy at home and return once stable. Again, each student should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

4. Expiration Date. Until superseded.

5. Inquiries. Inquiries should be directed to Carol Abnathy at (202) 693-3288 or [abnathy.carol@dol.gov](mailto:abnathy.carol@dol.gov).