



Riverside County District Attorney

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **CIVIL LAWSUIT SETTLEMENT ORDERS RITE AID STORES TO PROPERLY CONSULT WITH ALL PRESCRIPTION DRUG CONSUMERS**

RIVERSIDE – Today, June 30, 2014, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office announced the settlement of a \$498,250 civil lawsuit against the owners of the Rite Aid pharmacy chain in California.

The civil complaint, filed in San Diego Superior Court along with the DA's offices of San Diego and Alameda counties, alleges that California Rite Aid pharmacists failed to comply fully with the California Board of Pharmacy's (Board) rules requiring personal pharmacist consultations involving new prescriptions or new dosages of existing prescriptions purchased by California consumers.

The Board brought to the attention of the three DA's offices the problem of health risks to California pharmacy customers when pharmacists fail to properly provide needed personal consultation to prescription drug customers. Uninformed or improper use of prescription drugs harms an estimated 150,000 Californians each year and contributes to an estimated \$1.7 billion in economic losses across the state.

Regulations enforced by the Board require that a pharmacist provide personal consultation to a patient receiving a prescription drug not previously dispensed to that patient, or a prescription drug in a different dosage, form, or strength, or upon the patient's request.

The three DA's offices conducted an undercover investigation of the consultation practices of a number of the major pharmacy chains in California. The present enforcement action is the second of several such actions anticipated as a result of the investigation and follows a similar settlement in December 2013 involving CVS pharmacies.

Under the terms of the judgment, which was entered without admission of liability, Rite Aid is ordered to comply properly with the state standards for patient consultations and must fully implement an internal compliance program. Rite Aid also agreed to pay civil penalties of \$420,000 and investigative costs of \$78,250. The Riverside County DA's Office will receive a total of \$158,500. Rite Aid and its counsel worked cooperatively with prosecutors to promptly resolve the matter and to implement the new procedures.

Thrifty Payless, Inc., a California corporation, is the wholly owned subsidiary of Pennsylvania-based Rite Aid Corporation, a Delaware corporation. Thrifty Payless, Inc. owns and operates the 582 Rite Aid-branded pharmacies in California on behalf of the Rite Aid Corporation, including 39 in Riverside County.

The judgment was signed June 27, 2014, by San Diego Superior Court Judge Joel Wohlfeil.

In Riverside County, the case was handled by Deputy District Attorney Elise Farrell of the DA's Consumer Fraud Unit.