To: Pennsylvania Pharmacists

Re: Drug Disposal Options for Pharmacies

From: PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs

Date: July 1, 2018

65% of people who misused prescription painkillers used medications prescribed to someone else.
(National Survey on Drug Use and Health/NSDUH 2013 & 2014)

Encouraging individuals in your community to rid their medicine cabinets of unused or unwanted medications will help address the opioid epidemic in Pennsylvania. By offering drug disposal options, your pharmacy can help play a vital role in protecting the health of the community you serve.

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) regulations allow retail pharmacies to collect both controlled and non-controlled pharmaceutical drugs from ultimate users by voluntarily administering mail-back programs. We ask your pharmacy to consider purchasing a collection receptacle or utilizing other DEA-approved drug disposal methods such as supplying drug deactivation envelopes. Establishing a mail-back program in your pharmacy provides a safe location for customers to proactively make their homes safer.

In 2013, after visiting the successful drug take-back program in Bucks County, the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) initiated a partnership with the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association to develop an ongoing, statewide drug take-back system to help address the problem of prescription drug misuse. A $100,000 grant was obtained to purchase MedReturn medication collection boxes, and the DDAP worked with the Pennsylvania Attorney General and the Pennsylvania National Guard to dispose of medications collected at these sites. In addition to the boxes purchased through this grant, other police departments, as well as pharmacies, have purchased take-back boxes and informed our department about their locations.

As of this date, DDAP is aware of 732 boxes statewide, covering all 67 counties. The reported amount of medications disposed of so far in 2018 is more than 52,000 pounds or approximately 26 tons. Since the start of our take-back efforts, more than 395,000 pounds or 198 tons have been destroyed. We strongly encourage you to help strengthen our efforts by adding a take-back box to your pharmacy.

If you are interested in implementing a mail-back program, go to the DEA website at https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/, click “Register for Disposal of Controlled Substances” and then proceed to modify eligible DEA registration to collect pharmaceutical controlled substances from ultimate users. Two mail-back suggestions we are aware of include:

- MedSafe - The Sharps Compliance Corp. (http://www.sharpsinc.com/medsafe/).

Feel free to visit each website for complete and detailed information on how to obtain and purchase a collection box that is suitable for your pharmacy.

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If a mail-back program isn’t a workable option for your pharmacy, you may wish to consider providing drug deactivation envelopes for your customer’s personal use. Several options include:


If you have a mail-back box or plan to purchase one and want your location listed on the DDAP Prescription Drug Take Back website at [www.ddap.pa.gov](http://www.ddap.pa.gov), please contact George Reitz, Drug and Alcohol Program Analyst with DDAP, at 717-736-7469.