

ACTION ALERT

From WASAVP

The Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention

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Get drugs out of our homes safely – take action on Washington’s Secure Medicine Return bill!

Medicines help us when we’re sick. But sadly prescription drug abuse is a growing problem in our communities. Abuse of narcotics like OxyContin or Vicodin, and stimulants like Ritalin is increasing rapidly, especially among our teens. Drug overdoses have surpassed car accidents as the leading cause of accidental deaths in our state, with most involving prescription narcotics. Misused prescription drugs are now the drug of choice among 12- and 13-year olds.

Reducing access to prescription drugs in our homes to protect our children and our families.

Three out of five teens say it’s easy to get prescription pain relievers from their parents’ medicine cabinets. Most abusers of prescription drugs get them from a friend or relative for free. Accidental poisonings involving medicines are on the rise too, especially among kids and seniors, and risks increase when we store medicines we don’t need in our homes.

We need a safe and responsible way to get rid of pain killers and other medicines that are leftover or expired.

Call or email your Representatives today and ask them to **Support the Secure Medicine Return Bill** to create safe drug take-back programs for our communities! [Take Action NOW!](#)

Getting rid of unneeded medicines from our homes safely helps reduce access to drugs that could be abused or accidentally taken. We now know that flushing medicines is bad for the environment because septic systems and wastewater treatment plants can’t remove all drugs. Throwing leftover medicines in the trash isn’t a good solution either. Trash disposal is not safe for narcotics and other powerful medicines that might be accessed for illegal use or cause an accidental poisoning. And putting medicines in the trash doesn’t guarantee the chemicals won’t get into the environment from garbage cans or landfills. Drugs are being found in our waterways, potentially impacting fish and other aquatic species. And detectable amounts are being found in some drinking water supplies whose sources are downstream of wastewater treatment plants.

Medicine return programs are a safe and responsible way to dispose of leftover and expired medicines, but they need sustainable funding. Some law enforcement offices and pharmacies are collecting medicines and safely disposing of them, protecting our communities and our environment. Group Health Cooperative clinics and select Bartell Drugs locations have collected more than 27,000 pounds of unwanted medicines since October 2006, with little advertising. Through partnership with law enforcement, medicine return programs can collect controlled substances now, without changes to current federal law. These programs show medicine return programs work. However, their funding is not sustainable and the service is not available to all residents across our state. In several other countries, drug producers fund and provide medicine return programs.

The Secure Medicine Return Bill will require drug producers to provide a safe and convenient drug take-back program for Washington State. We need to make sure this bill passes this year!

Call or email your State Representatives today and ask them to **Support the Secure Medicine Return Bill** to create safe drug take-back programs for our communities! [Take Action NOW!](#)

Sample phone message for Legislative Hotline:

Take Action - Please call your State Representatives today and ask them to pass the Secure Medicine Return Bill out of the House.

Call the Toll-Free Legislative Hotline 1.800.562.6000

Open Monday – Friday, 8AM to Noon and 1PM to 4:30PM.

An operator will assist you and you can ask to leave a message for both your Representatives.

Sample message: “I’m concerned about prescription drug abuse and accidental poisonings in my community. Medicine return programs are the safest way to dispose of narcotics and other leftover medicines to protect our families. Please vote yes on the Secure Medicine Return bill, 2SHB 1165!”

Sample Text for Email to Representatives:

Subject Line: Support the Secure Medicine Return bill to protect our communities and our environment

Dear Representative,

I am writing to ask you to support an important bill from last session that needs to be passed this year to protect our communities and our environment. Our communities are grappling with a big and growing problem – drug abuse and accidental poisonings caused by prescription drugs and other medicines.

As my Representative, you can take action now to help our communities fight these serious problems by supporting the Secure Medicine Return Bill, 2SHB 1165.

A significant number of medicines go unused or expire, and keeping these medicines in our homes increases the risk of accidental poisonings and illicit use that can lead to drug addiction. A safe and secure method for collecting and properly disposing of unwanted household medicines will reduce access to prescription drugs for illicit use and reduce risk of accidental poisonings, as well as keep these waste medicines out of the environment.

Our medicine cabinets are taking the place of drug dealers. Over half of prescription drug abusers get the medicines from a friend or relative. National statistics show teens are using prescription drugs to get high second only to marijuana. 15% of 10th graders in Washington who abused prescription pain relievers got them from their own home or someone else’s home without permission according to the 2008 Healthy Youth Survey. Drug overdose deaths now surpass traffic deaths in our state, with 40% of poisoning deaths involve prescription opioid pain relievers. Accidental poisonings are also increasing, up 395% from 1990, with 85% of poisoning deaths involving medications.

Getting rid of unneeded medicines from our homes safely will help reduce access to drugs that could be abused or taken by mistake. People need a safer way to get rid of unneeded and expired medicines than flushing or putting them in the trash – practices which can pollute our waterways and aren’t safe. Flushing waste medicines is bad for the environment, and contributes to measurable levels of these drugs in our surface and ground water, as well as some drinking water supplies. Throwing medicines in the garbage - especially controlled substances like OxyContin and other pain relievers - is not safe because the drugs can be obtained and used illegally. Trash disposal also does not guarantee that these active compounds will not get out into the environment and cause harm.

Medicine return programs offer a secure and responsible alternative to flushing or trashing unneeded medicines. Community demand for medicine return programs is strong and a statewide solution is needed. Group Health Cooperative clinics and select Bartell Drugs locations have collected more than 27,000 pounds

of unwanted medicines since October 2006, with little advertising. Some police and sheriff's offices in Washington are offering drug take-back programs that collect narcotics, like OxyContin, and other legally prescribed controlled substances. **These voluntary take-back programs at some police stations and some pharmacies demonstrate strong community need, but without long-term funding, they are stop-gap measures and they only serve a small percentage of the state population.**

The Secure Medicine Return Bill (2SHB 1165) requires pharmaceutical producers to provide and pay for a cost-effective medicine return program that is convenient, safe and secure for residents across our state. Manufacturers already provide similar drug take-back programs in British Columbia and several European countries. A safe and secure system for collecting and properly disposing of unwanted household medicines will get these medicines out of our homes safely, and keep these waste medicines out of our waterways.

Please support the Secure Medicine Return Bill, 2SHB 1165, and do everything you can to ensure this important bill passes out of the House quickly in the 2010 legislative session.

Sincerely,

Overview of the Secure Medicine Return Bill (2SHB 1165):

- Requires producers of prescription and over-the-counter medicines sold in Washington State to provide and pay for a statewide medicine return program in Washington.
- Covers return of all over-the-counter and prescription drugs, including narcotic and other legally prescribed controlled substances.
- Gives the WA State Board of Pharmacy authority to license the medicine return program and to ensure that collection, transportation, and disposal of collected medicines is safe and secure.
- Convenient collection options must be provided in every county of the state and every city of more than 10,000 people.
- Collected medicines will be disposed of at a hazardous waste facility to ensure the highest level of protection.
- Does not require any money from the state or local governments. Drug producers will fund all costs, including collection, transportation, and disposal. All costs for state agencies providing oversight (Board of Pharmacy and Ecology) will be fully recovered through a fee on drug producers.

Link to more info on WA Legislature's web site: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1165&year=2009>

Link to more info about medicine return programs in Washington State: www.medicinereturn.com