

Secure Medicine Return

Skagit County Public Health



Overview

The accumulation of unused medicines in homes is a public and environmental health issue. Though several law enforcement offices offer secure disposal boxes for unused medicines, these locations are inconvenient for many people and lack sufficient and sustainable funding. Skagit County Board of Health recently adopted a Secure Medicine Return ordinance that will create and fund a comprehensive medicine return system for Skagit County. The ordinance is similar to ordinances passed by King, Snohomish, Kitsap, Pierce, Clallam and Whatcom counties.

Ordinance Highlights

- **Expand secure medicine disposal options** for Skagit County residents to reduce risks of poisonings and misuse, and to reduce pollution from waste pharmaceuticals.
- **Improve convenience for residents** by expanding the number of secure medication drop off sites to include pharmacies, hospitals and long-term care facilities (partnered with a retail pharmacy), in addition to law enforcement agencies. Prepaid mailer bags will also be a secure disposal option.
- **Ensure financial sustainability** through a pharmaceutical industry-financed system.

More Information

The Skagit County Board of Health adopted Skagit County Code (SCC) 12.20 Secure Medicine Return ordinance on February 21, 2018.

Public Health will receive a draft stewardship plan from the pharmaceutical producers or their stewardship group by August 2018.

Public Health will review the plan to ensure it meets the ordinance requirements. The public will also be able to provide written comments during the plan review process.

Written comment period for the draft plan will be coming in late Summer 2018

For more information please visit us online at:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/medicinereturn>

What is Pharmaceutical Stewardship?

The ordinance requires all companies that manufacture medicines – the producers – to develop and pay for a comprehensive and secure medicine return system. This concept is called **pharmaceutical stewardship**.

Pharmaceutical producers can combine their resources and hire a company, or **stewardship organization**, to coordinate the system. The stewardship organization will be required to develop a stewardship plan that meets Skagit County's required components. Skagit County Public Health will review the plan and oversee the approved program for safety and compliance.

Medicine accepted for disposal

Every collection site must accept the following medicines used in the home:

- Prescription medicines, including legally prescribed controlled substances (e.g. narcotics and stimulants)
- Over-the-counter medicines
- Includes brand name and generic medicine in all forms and pet medicines used in the home

Medicine NOT accepted:

- Over-the-counter medicines that are regulated as cosmetics by Food and Drug Administration (FDA), like toothpaste and sunscreen
- Vitamins and supplements
- Pharmaceutical wastes from businesses
- Other specific exempted drugs (e.g. illicit drugs such as marijuana, heroin, LSD)

Frequently Asked Questions

When will the additional drop boxes be available?

Additional drop boxes will be coming to Skagit County locations, including pharmacies, by late 2018 or early 2019. We will update our website and notify the public when we have more details.

What are the ways I will be able to dispose of my unwanted medicines?

The medicine collection system must provide reasonable and equitable access for all Skagit County residents

- Any Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) authorized pharmacy, hospital, or any law enforcement facility that volunteers to host a drop box will be able to participate.
- A minimum number of drop boxes is required in every city and town with a pharmacy, hospital, or a law enforcement facility.
- Pre-paid medicine return mailers will be available upon request by using the stewardship organization website and a toll-free phone number and from selected municipal offices that will hand out the pre-paid mailers.
- Special collection events may also be required in areas without a convenient local drop box location.

I have medications I need to get rid of right now. What are my options?

Until the pharmaceutical stewardship secure medicine return program is operational in 2019, we still have some law enforcement offices that offer a secure drop off box.

Please see the locations and hours listed on our website here: <https://www.skagitcounty.net/medicinereturn>

Do I have to pay to get rid of my unwanted medications?

No. You do not pay to use a drop box or to use a prepaid mailer or use a special medicine collection event.

The pharmaceutical producers are responsible for paying all costs of the program including: the secure drop boxes, pre-paid mailers, collection events, transportation and safe disposal of collected medicine, program promotion, and fees. Public Health will review and oversee the safety and compliance of the secure medicine return program.

How do I know my medications are safely and securely disposed?

Public Health will provide local review and enforcement of the Secure Medicine Return program. The collection and disposal activities must comply with all applicable state and federal laws including Drug Enforcement Agency and Environmental Protection Agency.

- Review and approve the stewardship plan(s)
- Ensure stewardship organizations are following the regulations
- Investigate complaints and enforce regulations

Implementation Timeline

The pharmaceutical industry producers have started their planning process. They will submit a draft plan to Public Health by August 2018. Once the stewardship plan is approved by Public Health, the producers have 3 months to begin operating the Secure Medicine Return program throughout Skagit County. We anticipate that the program will be operational by late 2018. Check our website for the latest information at: <https://www.skagitcounty.net/medicinereturn>



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