

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 unwanted or unused medicines, these locations are inconvenient for many people and lack sufficient and sustainable funding. Public Health is preparing policy for the Board of Health that will create and fund a comprehensive medicine return system. The proposed policy will be modeled on regulations passed by King, Snohomish, Kitsap, Pierce, Clallam and Whatcom counties.

Proposed Policy Goals

- **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 locations 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

What is the proposed legislation?

The proposed policy 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 policy 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)

Share your thoughts

The Skagit County Board of Health will vote on the proposed policy in February 2018.

Public Health is seeking public comment on the proposal; we want to hear your thoughts.

Comment period

February 5 to February 20, 2018.

Online: <http://www.skagitcounty.net/medicinereturn>

In person: You can provide oral and written feedback at the Public Hearing, set for 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, February 21, 2018.

Learn more about Secure Medicine Return on February 5 from 11:00-12:00 at the Commissioners Hearing Room, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon OR online at the address above.

Proposed Policy Components

Collection Systems

A medicine collection system must provide reasonably convenient and equitable access for all residents. Through this system:

- 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, town, and unincorporated area with a pharmacy, hospital, or a law enforcement facility
- In areas without enough drop boxes, collection events or prepaid return mailers must be provided
- Prepaid return mailers must also be available upon request for homebound or disabled residents

Secure Handling and Packaging

Stewardship organizations must handle collected medicines securely and confidentially. They must:

- Comply with all applicable state and federal laws, including the DEA's security procedures
- Protect patient confidentiality
- Recycle packaging, when possible

Disposal

Collected medicines must be destroyed at an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved hazardous waste facility. Public Health may approve the following alternative methods:

- A large municipal waste combustion facility
- Other disposal technologies that are safer for the environment and human health

Education & Outreach

Stewardship organizations must:

- Promote safe storage of medicine and use of the secure medicine return system
- Provide educational materials, including a website and a toll-free phone number
- Discourage disposal of medicine in the trash
- Use consistent-looking and secure drop boxes, with clear instructions on how to use them

Producer Costs

Pharmaceutical producers are responsible for all costs relating to:

- Secure drop boxes and collection supplies
- Transportation and final disposal of medicines
- Program promotion and evaluation
- Administrative costs
- Fees to the Public Health Department for plan review and annual oversight

Oversight & Enforcement

Public Health will:

- Review and approve the stewardship plan(s)
- Ensure stewardship organizations are following the regulations
- Investigate complaints and enforce regulations
- Evaluate program progress based on stewardship organization reports

Implementation Timeline

If the policy passes, the producers' stewardship organization will begin planning. It will take approximately 6-9 months for the program to be approved and begin operations.



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