

Alachua County, Florida

Program Overview: In the spring of 2004, the Alachua County (population 220,000) Environmental Protection Department (ACEPD) collected unwanted residential pharmaceuticals at 12 locations (pharmacies, clinics, and county facilities). The five-month, grant-funded collection program included prescription drugs, chemotherapy agents, and over-the-counter medications that were expired, damaged, no longer needed, or were otherwise unusable for their intended purpose. Only products in pill, capsule, or liquid form were collected. At collection locations, residents were asked to empty their medications into a collection container and then take home the empty containers. The collection container held a dilute acid to render the drugs unusable.

Additionally, a comprehensive advertising campaign was implemented to inform residents of the pharmaceutical waste collection project. Included in the media campaign was:

- Disbursement of a press release to all local media outlets
- A public service announcement
- Advertising in the Gainesville Sun and the Senior Times newspapers
- A Weather Channel Crawl on the local Cox cable system
- Printing of a point of purchase flyer
- Posting on the Alachua County web page
- Posting on the Earth 911 website

Sites: Twelve locations throughout Alachua County participated in the collection project. In selecting locations, the organizers aimed to include the county's smaller cities as well as locations within the city of Gainesville where the largest number of potential participants reside. Drop-off locations included the Alachua County Household Hazardous Waste Collection facility, the Alachua County Fire Rescue Department warehouse, pharmacies, and health department clinics.

Key Motivation: The pilot project collected unwanted and expired pharmaceuticals in an effort to (1) prevent second-hand use of prescription drugs, (2) reduce identity theft, and (3) prevent water supply contamination. The intent of the project was to make residents more aware of the potential negative impacts of improper disposal practices and to determine the effectiveness of a local program to collect and properly dispose of unwanted medicines. This pilot project aimed to establish a model for a safe, simple collection program that has a positive impact on the community and a diminished negative impact on the environment at a relatively low cost.

Organizing Body: The unwanted medication take-back pilot was primarily organized by the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department (ACEPD).

Partners: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Alachua County Household Waste Collection facility, Fire/Rescue personnel, various pharmacies, and health department clinics also offered assistance.

Level of Implementation: This program was enacted at the county level.

Cost: The pilot project was funded by a matching grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The final budget for the pilot project was \$15,944; the breakdown of expenses incurred in the project is as follows:

- Total personnel expenses (including salaries, etc.) = \$9,384
- Professional services (drum disposal costs) = \$550
- Promotional activities and advertising = \$4,643
- Operating expenses (drums, pails, funnels, labels) = \$1,367

Outcome: During the pilot project, a total of 305 pounds of pharmaceutical waste was collected and shipped to a hazardous waste disposal facility for incineration. An estimated 500 residents participated in the project.

Long-term Actions: The Household Hazardous Waste Collection facility continued to collect the medications after the five-month pilot as part of their existing program.

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