

Clark County, Washington

Program Overview: In late 2003, Clark County, Washington, (population 380,000) established a program to safely dispose of unwanted or outdated medications. The county-funded program is called the Unwanted Medications Take Back Program. Many of the county's pharmacies are participating in the program (Clark County has 60-70 pharmacies). Residents can drop off unwanted pharmaceuticals at participating pharmacies at no charge if the medication is:

- Not a controlled substance;
- In the original container with the name of the medicine clearly marked;
- In a sealed container that does not leak;
- In a container that has all patient information either removed or crossed out.

Pharmacies put the collected pharmaceuticals into a shipping container. When the container is full, pharmacies notify the county and ship the materials to the county's hazardous waste contractor for incineration. The county pays for the shipments by allowing pharmacies to charge the shipment to its FedEx account number.

Pharmacists can refuse any patient return, as long as they tell the patient why the return was refused. For example, pharmacists will not accept leaking containers and controlled substances. When a product is refused, the pharmacist directs the resident to the county household hazardous waste program or to the sheriff.

Clark County tells residents to check with a doctor or pharmacist to determine if their drug is a controlled substance. Residents are instructed to bring controlled medicines to any of four local police and sheriff's offices, where each controlled substance is heat-sealed in a plastic bag and secured in a locked container until it is shipped off-site for disposal with drugs collected by the sheriff as evidence in criminal cases.

Additionally, Clark County has been taking back non-controlled consumer drugs for approximately 12 years at three household hazardous waste (HHW) facilities. The state also offered a pharmaceutical waste training program in October 2003.

Collection Sites: Collection of unwanted and expired medicines occurs at 47 pharmacies, two sheriff's offices, and two police departments. For a list of participating pharmacists, police stations and household hazardous waste collection facilities, visit <http://www.clark.wa.gov/recycle/a-z/materials/drugs.html> or call (360) 397- 6118 ext. 4352 and ask for a copy to be mailed to you. Their program brochure can also be downloaded at www.clark.wa.gov/recycle/publication.html.

Key Motivation: The Medications Take Back Program began in 2003 after proper drug disposal was recognized as a leading environmental issue. Clark County has been primarily motivated by the potential environmental threat posed by discharging pharmaceutical products to the environment.

Organizing Body: The HHW and pharmacy take-back program was the result of the combined efforts of all local pharmacies, the state board of pharmacy, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the county sheriff's office.

Partners: Pharmacies, County Sheriff, Household Hazardous Waste Collection program

Level of Implementation: This program was implemented at the county level, although it required statewide cooperation.

Cost: The costs of this program were absorbed through public programs and the local pharmacies.

Outcome: The total weight and number of pills collected is not known. However, it has been documented that 23 lbs. of *controlled* pharmaceuticals were collected in 2006.

Long-term Actions: This program is available every day.

Contacts: Jim Mansfield
Solid Waste Program, Public Works Department
Phone: (360) 397-6118 x 4016
E-mail: jim.mansfield@clark.wa.gov