

Maine

Program Overview: The Safe Medicine Disposal for ME program provides Maine's residents with a safe disposal option for unused and unwanted medicine. Free medicine mailback envelopes are available at participating sites. This program is funded through an allocation from the Fund for Healthy Maine administered by the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Under this system, consumers use prepaid mailing envelopes to send their unwanted pharmaceuticals to the Maine DEA. The envelopes are made available to the public at various locations including pharmacies, physicians' offices, and post offices.

Maine also created the U.S. National Registry for Unused and Expired Medications (USNRUEM) to help unify and streamline its efforts. Through this registry, all drug return or take-back programs and pilots have an opportunity to provide data to a national registry in Houston, Texas which has been operational since January 2005. Data collected from this registry will help guide policy makers regarding pharmacy policy, patient education and safety, and prescribing options. An example of the USNRUEM [Questionnaire for Returned Medications by Individual Donor](#)[®] is available in [Section 3](#), along with [other data collection forms](#).

From the website: <http://www.safemeddisposal.com/>

Safe Medicine Disposal for ME represents the first program of its kind in the nation. The Center on Aging and its statewide and national partners received funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency to pilot a prescription medicine disposal program by mail. The program is now funded through a Fund for Healthy Maine allocation to the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency. This program will provide postage-paid envelopes and participant surveys to interested individuals throughout Maine.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF SAFE MEDICINE DISPOSAL FOR ME?

1. Create a centralized mail-in collection point for disposal of unused medicine, allowing researchers to analyze the type and quantity of medicine that is accumulating in the homes of Maine residents.
2. Use program research to inform prescribing policy and practice in Maine
3. Develop an educational outreach campaign to inform Maine's older adults and caregivers about the risks to keeping unused medicine in the home, as well as the benefits of safe medicine disposal.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MEDICINE?

All envelopes with the unused medicine and completed surveys will be returned to the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency for safe storage. The Maine Drug Enforcement Agency will oversee the cataloging and disposal of returned medicine.

Additionally, Maine's mail-back program was implemented to help the state save money in Medicaid pharmaceutical costs. Since every returned prescription medication represents a wasted health care expenditure, a careful analysis of which medications are not taken by patients may provide important clues about ways to eliminate wasted health care dollars. This potential in Medicaid savings could make Maine's Unused Pharmaceutical Return Program an attractive model for other states.

Organizing Body: Maine's Unused Pharmaceutical Disposal Program is administered by the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Outcome: Maine's Mailback program is currently finalizing its data reports on collection volumes via the mailback envelopes. To view preliminary results, go to:
<http://www.safemeddisposal.com/documents/DisposalPanelKayeCrittenden10-19-09.pdf>

Other: Maine has recently passed legislation that requires a 15-pill limit on first-time prescriptions for Medicare patients.

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