

Monroe County, Indiana

Program Overview: In 2001, the Monroe County (population 121,407) Solid Waste Management District (SWMD) and the Monroe/Owen TRIAD (partnership between police, sheriffs and senior citizens' organizations) initiated a pilot take-back program for unwanted and expired pharmaceuticals. The following items were collected:

- Liquid and solid over-the-counter and prescription medicines, including pills, syrups, creams, ointments, and eye drops.
- Controlled substances
- Vitamins and health supplements
- Common medical equipment, including sharps, inhalers, and mercury thermometers

Currently, the partnership is implementing two medicine collection programs. In addition to annual week-long collection events specially designated for medicines, the county's HHW drop-off site accepts medicines and is open six days per week, year-round. Since law enforcement officials can only be present at the HHW site for the annual week-long event, controlled substances are only accepted during that week, while non-controlled medications are accepted year-round. For the remainder of the year, controlled medications can be brought to the Sheriff's Department for disposal.

At the week-long collection events, controlled substances are taken into the possession of a law enforcement official and transported to the Sheriff's Department, where the drugs are incinerated with other confiscated drugs.

All other collected items are transported to the Monroe County SWMD household hazardous waste (HHW) facility in compliance with DOT regulations. There they are sorted into categories such as aerosols, mercury-containing compounds, etc., and are disposed of by the SWMD's hazardous waste contractor. Where appropriate, the unwanted medicines collected are incinerated (this is not the case for the mercury-containing products, but it is the normal procedure for most medicines).

Collection Sites: The collection program began with senior centers and has now expanded to libraries, fire stations, and police stations in order to reach an expanded clientele. And all HHW sites serve as collection centers as well.

Key Motivation: Originally, Monroe County's pharmaceutical disposal initiative was driven by TRIAD, an organization that connects law enforcement officials and seniors to help reduce crime and increase consumer education and safety. Therefore, concern for the accidental ingestion of expired pharmaceuticals by the elderly provided the force for the campaign. Additionally, since 2001, potential harm to children and animals and concern for the environment have also been cited as motivators for the take-back program.

Organizing Body: The key organizers of the program are the Monroe County Solid Waste Management District and the Monroe/Owen TRIAD.

Partners: Indiana State Police, Sheriff's Department, Local Fire Departments, School Corporation, Area 10 Agency on Aging, Indiana Attorney General, AARP, Retired and Senior Volunteer Programs (RSVP), SMART, Monroe County Prosecutor's Office

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

Cost: Expenses were shared between the parties involved. The Monroe County SWMD covered the disposal fees (\$285 per 55-gallon drum), TRIAD and the Indiana Attorney General's office paid for signage, the Sheriff's Department provided a reserve deputy for each collection site and paid for flyers to promote the events, and AARP sent a direct mailer about the events to all of its members in the county and provided give-aways for participants and refreshments for volunteers.

Advertising: Collection programs were publicized through the AARP mailer, a newspaper article, flyers, senior citizen publications, public service announcements, an advertisement on prescription drug packaging at the local pharmacies, and the Indiana State Police's weekly radio show.

Outcome: Increasing numbers of participants in the single-day events each year, with 281 in 2006. 280 lbs. of solid pharmaceutical waste and 76 lbs. of liquids were collected in 2006, in addition to 272 containers of controlled substances and 166.7 lbs. of sharps.

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See www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/mrw/ppt/2005/ScottMorgan.ppt