

Secure Medicine Return Information for Pharmacies

October 2017

Whatcom County Health Department

Overview

At the request of the Whatcom County Health Board, the Health Department is preparing legislation for the Board's consideration that will create and fund a comprehensive medicine return system. The proposed policy will be modeled on regulations passed by the local boards of health in King, Snohomish, Kitsap, and Pierce Counties.

Proposed Policy Goals

- **Expand secure medicine disposal options** for Whatcom County residents to reduce risks of medicine poisonings and misuse, and reduce pollution from waste pharmaceuticals
- **Improve convenience for residents** by expanding the number of locations where people can drop off their unused medicines
- **Ensure financial sustainability** through a pharmaceutical industry-financed system

What is pharmaceutical stewardship?

The proposed policy requires the companies who manufacture medicines – the producers – to develop and pay for a comprehensive 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. Stewardship organizations will be required to develop a stewardship plan that meets the required policy components. The Whatcom County Health Department will review the plan and oversee the approved program for safety and compliance.

How do pharmacies fit in?

In the proposed policy, retail pharmacies can volunteer to host a secure drop-box where people drop off unwanted medicine. To participate a pharmacy must:

- Be a registered pharmacy with the Washington State Pharmacy Assurance Commission
- Amend registration with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to become a collector.
- Authorize two employees to maintain keys to the secure drop-box.
- Lock the drop-box when the site is closed.
- Manage and maintain required documentation.

We want to hear from you!

The Whatcom County Health Board will vote on the proposed policy in December.

The health department is seeking public comment on the proposal, and we want to hear your thoughts.

Please visit our website to learn more about secure medicine return and to submit a comment:
www.whatcomcounty.us/2652/Secure-Medicine-Return

For more information contact:
health@co.whatcom.wa.us
(360)778-6000

Frequently Asked Questions

I am a retail pharmacy but don't want to host a drop-box. Is that okay?

Yes, you are not required to host a drop-box. However, if you choose not to participate, you will be required to share educational materials with customers on medicine return programs and drop-box locations in Whatcom County.

Our pharmacy is a compounding-only pharmacy. Can we participate?

Yes. Any pharmacy registered with the Washington State Pharmacy Assurance Commission and authorized by the DEA as a collector can participate to host a drop-box. The only exception to this is pharmacies run by facilities that handle and administer drugs for their patients. These facilities must follow existing laws regarding business disposal of medications.

What will it cost to host a drop-box?

The cost should be minimal and may include some staff time to maintain the drop-box. The pharmaceutical industry and stewardship organization will purchase and install the drop-box and will securely collect, transport, and destroy unused medications. They will give you educational materials on the medicine return program for your customers. Since there must be a minimum number of drop-boxes throughout the county, pharmacies can negotiate payment for their participation.

What type of medicine is accepted in the drop-boxes?

Most prescription, pet medication and over-the-counter medicine from the home is accepted. This includes controlled substances.

Not accepted:

- Vitamins and supplements
- Herbal based remedies and homeopathic drugs
- Personal care products regulated as both cosmetics and nonprescription drugs under the federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act
- Injector products and medical devices that contain no covered drug
- Biological products
- Pet products containing pesticide, like flea collars
- Schedule I drugs, like marijuana

Where can I find more information about the proposed policy?

More information is available on our website at www.whatcomcounty.us/2652/Secure-Medicine-Return

How do we sign up?

Whatcom County Health Department will notify all pharmacies if the regulation passes. You can then let us know if you want to participate. There will still be opportunity to participate at a later time if you decide not to participate right away.

When does it start?

If the policy is passed, the program will begin operations in fall or winter 2018.