



Summary Overview

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The King County Board of Health passed the Secure Medicine Return Regulations on June 20, 2013, establishing an industry-funded product stewardship model to collect and safely dispose of unwanted household medicines from residents of the county. Secure medicine take-back programs protect public health by reducing the amount of medicines available for misuse and keeping waste medicines out of the environment. Reducing access to drugs through medicine take-back programs is a key part of a comprehensive approach to reducing prescription drug abuse, preventable poisonings and overdose.

Approved Stewardship Plans

Following adoption of King County's regulations two stewardship organizations submitted proposed stewardship plans for review and approval. Both plans have been approved to operate in King County on behalf of the drug producers they represent. Currently there are 380 participating drug producers in a stewardship plan.

Convenient and Equitable Collection

Medicine collection is expected to be available starting this summer. When the program is in operation, residents will be encouraged to bring leftover, expired, and unneeded medicines to secure drop-boxes in retail pharmacies and law enforcement offices throughout the county.

Drug producers are required to provide a minimum of one drop-box in each city, town and unincorporated community service area of the county. One additional drop-box is also required for every 30,000 residents within each city, town and unincorporated community service area. Drop-boxes will be geographically distributed to assure service is convenient and accessible to all residents.

Residents that are differentially-abled or homebound will be able to dispose of their unwanted medicines using a mail-back envelope. Envelopes are available by request or can be provided by a home care provider. Periodic collection events will also be provided to supplement collection for any underserved area of the county.

Collection Program Accepts Most Medicines

Residential medicines accepted for disposal includes both controlled and non-controlled substances. Certain medicines purchased without a prescription (over-the-counter) do not meet the requirements for disposal and will not be accepted. Additionally, the collection program is for residential use only and will not collect pharmaceutical waste from businesses.

Medicines accepted for return

All prescription and non-prescription (over-the-counter) medicines used by residents in their homes or in other residential settings will be accepted. Includes medicines sold in any form, both brand name and generic; and includes legally prescribed controlled substances, such as OxyContin, Vicodin, Valium, Ritalin, and stimulants..

Medicines not accepted for return

Over-the-counter drugs that are regulated as cosmetics (for example toothpaste, sunscreen, medicated shampoos); vitamins and supplements.

Cost Responsibility

Obligated drug producers are responsible for the costs of collection supplies for drop-off sites, prepaid mailers, collection events, transportation and disposal, program promotion and evaluation, and other administrative costs. Drug producers cannot charge residents a fee for using the secure medicine return program, either when purchasing or returning medicines.

Collectors participate voluntarily and provide in-kind staff time at drop-off sites. The Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County (LHWMP) is responsible for costs of up to 400 secure drop boxes.

Promotion and Evaluation

Drug producers are required to promote safe storage of medicines and how to use the medicine return system. They are also required to conduct periodic surveys and report on the awareness and understanding of the program by residents. Drop-off locations and other collection services will be promoted to the community through a toll-free telephone line, a website, and print materials. LHWMP is also responsible for providing additional promotion of the take-back program to residents.

Oversight and Enforcement

Public Health-Seattle & King County and LHWMP will oversee the program to ensure compliance and safety, including review and approval of the stewardship plan(s) from drug producers, monitoring of plan operations, and review of annual reports. Drug producers who are not in compliance with the regulations are subject to civil penalties.

For Information about Secure Medicine Return Regulations

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Visit our website: www.KingCountySecureMedicineReturn.org