

Washington State is in the Midst of an Opioid and Suicide Crisis

- Overdoses are the most common cause of accidental deaths, outnumbering car accidents. In 2016, there were **694 overdose deaths** (435 attributed to prescription opioids).
- **Over 200 suicides** were attributed to prescription drugs in 2015.
- There were 960 **accidental poisonings** related to prescription drugs in 2015.
- In **Washington State** between 2012 and 2016, **3,467 people died of opioid-related overdose deaths**.



People Get Drugs from Medicine Cabinets

- Washingtonians filled over 70 million prescriptions last year. Studies show that **about one-third of medicines will be unused**.
- About 70 percent of people who abuse prescription drugs obtain them from family and friends, including from the medicine cabinet.
- 80% of heroin users started by using pain medications prescribed to them or someone they know

Unused, expired and leftover medicines accumulate in homes and increase the risks of drug abuse, overdoses and preventable poisonings. Flushing drugs or throwing them out in the trash poses potential safety and health hazards. Washington families need a safe, convenient, responsible way to dispose of unused medication.

The Secure Drug Take-Back Act creates a Safe, Statewide System for the Collection and Disposal of Unneeded Medicines



The Act requires drug manufacturers that sell drugs in or into Washington to implement a safe drug disposal program which:

- Provides a collection system that is **safe, secure, and convenient** on an ongoing, **year-round** basis
- Include drop-off sites to provide reasonably convenient and equitable access across the state i.e. retail pharmacies, hospital or clinics with an on-site pharmacy, or law enforcement agencies
- Disposes of collected drugs at a properly permitted incineration facility
- Develops a system of **promotion, education** and **public outreach** about safe storage and secure collection of pharmaceuticals
- Adheres to the **strict security regulations** mandated by the Drug Enforcement Administration

Everyone in Washington deserves access to a secure, safe, convenient method to dispose of unused medicines.

Secure Medicine Return is a Key Part of Addressing the Opioid Epidemic

Efforts to end the opioid epidemic in Washington state have focused on treatment and enforcement. This public health crisis requires efforts across three general areas: 1) **Emergency Care**, 2) **Treatment**, and 3) **Prevention**.

Recent progress includes:

- Strengthening the guidelines for prescribing opioids ('09-'10 *HB 2876*)
- Improving opioid treatment programs ('17-'18 *HB 1427*)
- Increasing access to opioid antagonists critical for overdose emergency care ('15-'16 *HB 1671*)
- Enhancing the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) ('15-'16 *HB 2730*)
- Improving the training for suicide assessment, treatment and management ('15-'16 *HB 1424*)



However, we have not made significant progress in **drug misuse prevention**. While Washington does benefit from the PMP and some prescription guidelines, which helps regulate prescriptions for narcotics, the program does not address **what happens to a drug once a prescription is filled**.

The Drug Take-Back Act is a pivotal next step in prevention and in the overall fight against the opioid epidemic and increasing suicide rates.

How Much Will It Cost?

The estimated cost for pharmaceutical manufacturers:

- **About 0.1 percent of the \$5.7 billion in annual medicine sales in Washington, or**
- **1 penny for public safety out of every \$10 in sales**

Drug manufacturers pay for and operate the program, controlling their own funds. Manufacturers can pass drug take-back costs along the pharmaceutical supply chain, but cannot charge a direct fee to consumers.

Pharmacies, clinics, hospitals, law enforcement agencies, and other authorized collectors can contribute to the programs by volunteering to host and staff the secure drop-boxes and by assisting with consumer education.

Success in Action

Six Washington counties have enacted similar local Board of Health Secure Medicine Return regulations: King, Snohomish, Kitsap, Pierce, Clallam, Whatcom, and more counties are considering similar programs. The Drug Take-Back Act is patterned after these successful programs, which will facilitate statewide implementation. Now is the time to create a uniform, statewide Drug take-back program that will help decrease the opioid and suicide crises in every corner of the state.

Supporters of WA Secure Drug Take-Back Act *(partial list)*

WA State Medical Association
WA State Hospital Association
WA State Dental Association
WA State Nurses Association
Association of WA Cities
WA Poison Center
WA Environmental Council
Zero Waste Washington

WA Association of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs
WA State Council of Fire Fighters
WA Association for Substance Abuse & Violence Prevention
WA State Senior Citizens' Lobby
WA State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
WA Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics

WA State Pharmacy Association
WA Chapter - American College of Emergency Physicians
WA State Association of Local Public Health Officials
Forefront: Innovations in Suicide Prevention at UW