



Colorado Household Medication Take-Back Program

Update to Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders Study Committee – July 30, 2019

Background

The Colorado Household Medication Take-Back Program (program) was established in HB14-1207 and is codified in state statute (CRS 25-15-328). Rules and regulations governing the program were adopted by the Solid and Hazardous Waste Commission in May 2016 (6 CCR 1010-23). The program is administered by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (the department).

Program Operations

The program provides a safe, effective and economical way for Coloradans to properly dispose of their unused or expired medications. Program operations are funded through a \$300,000 annual General Fund appropriation. The department has recently renewed a contract with Trilogy Medwaste (formerly Assured Waste Solutions, LLC) for FY 2020. Trilogy Medwaste, a DEA-registered reverse distributor, receives shipment of medications from program collection sites via UPS and stores them for up to 30-days before transporting them to incineration.

Law enforcement agencies, retail pharmacies, and hospitals/clinics with on-site pharmacies can voluntarily apply to serve as medication collectors. If approved by the department, collectors are provided kiosks and all supplies needed for their packaging and shipment of medications to Trilogy Medwaste, along with training and documents needed to properly handle and track collected medications. Collectors are allowed to accept prescription medications, including prescribed controlled substances, and over-the-counter medications.

Program Promotion

The public can find collection locations and lists of accepted and non-accepted items at the program website, takemedback.org. This URL serves as the disposal landing page for the web site, takemedseriously.org, which provides broader information on the proper use, storage and disposal of household medications. The websites are maintained by the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, which also produces and distributes on-line and printed promotional materials. The program periodically utilizes radio and TV public service announcements along with on-line digital and social media campaigns to increase public awareness. Communities often promote their local collection sites through various media.

Program Performance

Since program inception in October 2016, 158 collection sites covering 60 counties have been enrolled in the program. 78 of the enrolled sites are law enforcement agencies, 40 are retail pharmacies, and 40 are hospitals or clinics with on-site pharmacies. A total of 15 Kaiser Permanente clinics joined the program during May and June 2019.

Through FY 2019, the program has collected 69,786 pounds of medications. Collection amounts have been trending upward, with at least 4,000 pounds collected in both May and June of 2019. The top five performing collection sites are:

1. Boulder County Sheriff - 3,684 lb
2. Littleton Policy Department - 3,474 lb
3. Castle Rock Policy Department - 2,995 lb
4. Parker Police Department - 2,684 lb
5. Denver Health Primary Care Clinic - 2,529 lb

The addition of Kaiser Permanente locations is likely to dramatically increase program collections. In June 2019, they contributed 1,052 of the 4,768 pounds (22%) collected.

The average cost for medication destruction, including packaging materials, UPS shipping, contractor handling/storage, contractor transport to incineration, and incineration is \$3.26/lb. This is significantly less than the \$5.68/lb cost realized in the department's medication take-back pilot program operated from December 2009 through June 2016. The pilot program operated 12 contractor-serviced kiosks with disposal of medications in a Colorado industrial waste landfill.

Prospects for Further Expansion

With collection amounts and disposal costs increasing, the program is taking a more strategic approach to adding new collection sites. Expansion efforts are focused on adding sites in the four currently unserved counties (Dolores, Huerfano, Kiowa, and Mineral) and on unserved cities with populations of 1,000 or more. Currently, the program serves 65% of cities this size. The department is working to raise this percentage to 70% by the end of FY 2020.

Program Expansion to Include Collection and Disposal of Sharps

On May 23, 2019, Governor Polis signed SB19-227 which, in part, expands the program to include the safe collection and disposal of needles, syringes and other devices used to inject medication (sharps). Used sharps are a potential source of blood-borne pathogens, so qualifying collection locations and methods of collection and disposal may differ significantly from those employed for unused medications. Development of the sharps program will take place in FY 2020, with the department assembling stakeholders to develop proposed amendments to the rules and regulations governing the program for consideration by the Solid and Hazardous Waste Commission. A rulemaking hearing will likely take place in February 2020. Program implementation will begin in FY 2021.