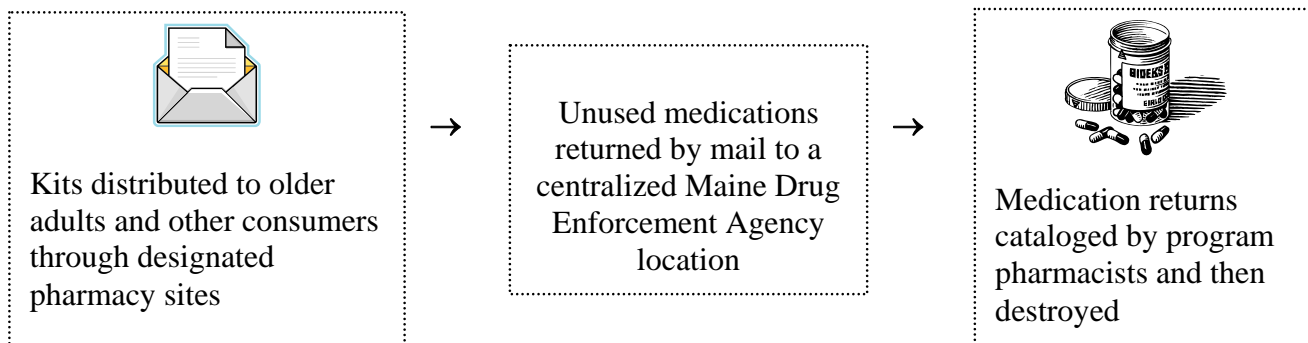


Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Program



The University of Maine Center on Aging in partnership with the Maine Benzodiazepine Study Group and other partnering agencies has received funding through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to pilot test a prescription drug-return-by-mail program. In 2003, Maine legislation requiring a similar mail-back process was passed, however, no funding was available to carry out that law. This federal grant will now allow the vision of that legislation, the first of its kind in the US, to be fulfilled.

Program Take-Back Model at a glance:



The Center on Aging's innovative program has three major objectives:

1. Create a centralized mail-in collection hub for unused medications allowing researchers to analyze the types and numbers of medications that are accumulating in the medicine cabinets of older adults in Maine.
2. Pilot testing this unused drug return model at a manageable level will allow the costs and hurdles of rolling out a large scale mail-back program to be ironed out and understood.
3. Develop an educational outreach campaign to inform older Mainers about the dangers of keeping expired and unused pills around in their homes and also about the benefits of safely disposing of such medications.

Why Maine?

- Maine has the oldest population in the nation as measured by median age. Americans age 65 and older account for over one-third of all prescription drugs dispensed, despite making up only about 13% of the national population.
- The state of Maine has previously experienced and documented the consequences of unused drugs remaining in circulation. In 2002, nearly 90% of all drug deaths in Maine were caused by prescription drugs. Maine DEA arrests for prescription drug theft and misuse have increased dramatically to 16% of all arrests in the state. Maine ranks number one in the country in terms of the relationship of pharmaceuticals to violent crime and property crime.
- There are many benefits from both environmental and social standpoints to have a mail-back program established in the US. The potential environmental benefits include: protecting water, provide a safe alternative from stockpiling medications in consumer's homes, and soil supplies from drug contamination and

prevention of accidental poisonings of humans, pets, and wildlife. From a social standpoint such a program presents the opportunity to: limit drug related crimes, limit opportunities for drug abuse, and reduce waste related to medical and insurance costs.

This initiative is a unique collaboration between environmental, drug enforcement, and healthcare officials and puts the University of Maine in the forefront of innovative outreach research for older adults. Lessons learned in this pilot program can be used to shape state and national public policy, physician prescribing practices, and health education outreach strategies.

Program Partners:

Program partners include the: University of Maine Center on Aging, United States Environmental Protection Agency, United States Postal Service, Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety, Maine Benzodiazepine Study Group, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, Rite Aid Pharmacies, Maine Office of Elder Services, Maine Office of Substance Abuse, Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians, Maine Office of the Attorney General, Maine Pharmacy Association, Maine RSVP Programs, Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, National Council on Patient Information and Education, Northern New England Poison Center, Villanova University Center for the Environment, Maine Council for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and individual participating pharmacies throughout Maine including Miller Drug, Penobscot Community Health Center Pharmacy, and the Penobscot Nation Health Center Pharmacy.

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