



# Prescription Drug Take Back Toolkit

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY & SAFELY HOST A  
DRUG TAKE BACK EVENT IN TEXAS



**TEXANS** FOR  
**SAFE AND**  
**DRUG-FREE**  
**YOUTH**

















### Federal Environmental Regulations

Medications collected from households at take back events are considered household waste and are exempt from federal hazardous waste requirements. However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends incineration as the best method to dispose of collected medications in order to address environmental and diversion concerns. According to the EPA, household wastes, including pharmaceuticals found in homes, are generally considered municipal solid waste. The management and disposal of municipal solid waste is regulated by local and state environmental agencies rather than at the federal level. Depending on state and local requirements, organizers of take back events typically dispose of the collected pharmaceuticals at permitted municipal solid waste incinerators or permitted hazardous waste incinerators. In addition, organizers of collection events should contact the local and state environmental regulatory agency to ensure that the collected hazardous pharmaceutical wastes are managed in accordance with all local and state environmental regulations. However, EPA generally recommends that collected household hazardous wastes be managed and disposed of as hazardous wastes.

### Texas Environmental Regulations

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) is governed under Subchapter N: Household Hazardous Wastes. For medication take back events, HHW disposal regulations do not apply when less than 100 lbs of HHW is collected in one year. Take back events could separate HHW from non-HHW to ensure that they collect less than 100 lbs. of HHW per year, which would exempt them from notification, reporting, and other requirements governing HHW. Additionally, events could dispose of the non-HHW in a less-regulated and simpler manner than the HHW. However, separating the medications in this way is not often feasible for take back programs. As such, take back organizers leading typical drug take back events can assume they will not collect more than 100 lbs. of HHW each year.

Organizers and volunteers should only take the time to separate HHW from non-HHW when there are enough volunteers and capacity to do so. Volunteers with expertise in prescription medications can assist with the organization process, while the remaining volunteers assist with the collection of medications. Separating medications with limited volunteers could pose a safety risk.

Further guidance is provided on Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's website at <http://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/hhw/additional-program-guidance>. Organizers are encouraged to contact TCEQ with questions or for more direct assistance regarding their take back event.

### III. Choosing an Event Location

A. There are many factors to consider when selecting a location for the medication take back event:

1. The location should be easily accessible to community members and provide ample space to set up a table, shade or rain cover, and medication collection boxes.
2. There should be adequate space for participants to either park and walk to the collection area or drive through to drop off the medication.
3. A location that is well-known to your community will encourage participation. Using the same location each year will increase participation.
4. A site that is near or incorporated into a location that receives regular foot traffic often makes it easier for citizens to participate and is also a way to advertise the take back on the day of the event.

#### Toolkit Tip:

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Be careful that the location is not too busy or crowded—law enforcement officers need to be able to easily secure and control the site for safety and to prevent diversion. If your location is in a busy area, be sure your event is clearly separate from other events, perhaps through ropes or barricades, or simply ensure ample space between event areas.

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B. Examples of sites used for take backs in communities across Texas:

1. Parking lots of a church, mall, retail center, school or university
2. Community parks (pavilion or parking lot)
3. Household hazardous waste disposal facilities
4. School cafeterias or gymnasiums
5. Police departments
6. Fire departments
7. Substance abuse treatment organizations

### IV. Safety Plan

Safety for everyone involved is of utmost importance at a take back event. Take back organizers should develop a safety plan that includes contact information for all organizers, describes how to handle dangerous materials should they be returned, and explains procedures for responding to an accidental needle-stick from needles/sharps being collected.

Prior to the take back event, hold a safety briefing for all staff and volunteers. Remind volunteers about the laws prohibiting drug diversion and advise them about the necessary precautions to take when handling medications. They should not open or empty medication bottles and should be careful to avoid needle-sticks from collected sharps. If collecting medications by hand, volunteers should wear gloves and ask participants if they are returning any needles.

For take back events that allow cars to drive through, designate a clear path for cars and areas for volunteers. Volunteers should be easily identifiable, perhaps all wearing the same t-shirt or reflective safety vests. Details about how to remain safe around cars should be addressed before or at the start of the event during the safety briefing.

## **V. Event Setup and Logistical Details**

### **A. Supplies**

The type and amount of supplies will vary depending on the size of the take back event. Essential equipment includes:

1. Collection containers
  - a. Containers should be leak proof and able to be incinerated along with the medication if needed. (The DEA will provide cardboard collection boxes if you partner with them on National Drug Take Back Days)
2. Sharps containers
  - a. Containers need to be puncture resistant, leak proof and preferably able to be incinerated along with the medication. You can use the medical waste sharps containers or other containers made of thick plastic, such as empty bleach bottles
3. Tape to secure boxes for transport
4. Chairs for volunteers and law enforcement officers
5. Cover for shade and rain protection, such as a pop-up tent or tarp, if the location does not have a covered area
6. Table for promotional materials, resources, and/or handouts (if desired)
7. Water for volunteers and law enforcement officers
8. Trash bags
9. Sign indicating the take back event location (to hang from the table or on a nearby wall)
10. Directional signage for event location
11. Disposable gloves to use in case medication needs to be handled

Optional supplies:

- Pens and clipboards to conduct surveys or questionnaires
- Food for volunteers
- Camera to document the event
- Paper sacks to collect medications from car windows if your take back is a drive-through (and then put the sacks in the collection box)
- A scale for weighing the amount of medication collected

### Toolkit Tip:

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If you hold your take back event on a DEA National Take Back Day, the DEA will supply all boxes, plastic bags, and sharps containers for collection. They will also supply tape to secure the boxes for transport. Verify this information with your local DEA agent prior to the event date.

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A reminder about good signage: Signs will help make your site easily identifiable as a take back location. To ease traffic flow, include signs showing where participants should enter and exit and where to park, if necessary. You may want to place your signs up to  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away from your site to guide participants to your location. Signs can be made by hand or printed, just be sure that signs are large enough to read from the street.

### B. Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to set up the event and clean up after the event. Duties include:

1. Placing directional signs pointing to the event location
2. Setting up tables, chairs, signs and supplies
3. Directing traffic
4. Collecting medications from a car (if the event is a drive-through collection)
5. Answering questions people may have
6. Asking survey questions or distributing/collecting questionnaires (if desired)
7. Sorting and cataloging medications (must be done by volunteer pharmacists or pharmacy students)

The number of volunteers needed will vary by location, site set-up, and anticipated level of participation. Each take back event should have at least two organizers (volunteers or staff) present at all times, along with the law enforcement officer. We recommend having at least four or more organizers (volunteers or staff) present in order to ensure enough people are available to help participants and adequately respond to any issues that may arise.

## Toolkit Tip:

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Locations where participants drive-through and hand medications to a volunteer through their car window will require more volunteers than locations where participants walk up and drop their medications in the disposal box. Also, locations that are collecting survey information from participants will likely need more volunteers in order to administer the survey.

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Recruit volunteers at least two weeks, if not a month or more before, your event. (See the list of potential community partners in Section I of this toolkit.) Check with your local DEA agent or law enforcement agency regarding their age restrictions for volunteers.

### C. Site Detail

It is very helpful to visit the site of your take back event a few weeks in advance. Visit the location at the same time of day and as the same day of the week for which the event is planned in order to survey the location's layout, traffic flow and crowd level, this will assist with planning the design of your take back event. While onsite:

1. Map out the entrances and exits, parking locations or drive-through routes
2. Plan where you will place tables and collection boxes
3. Choose where you will place directional signs
4. Identify any potential obstacles to hosting the event in this location at that day and time

Taking pictures of the location is a great way to explain the site detail to partners or co-workers who could not attend in person.

### D. Media at Take Back Events

Take back events are a great way to get media coverage for your organization and issues related to prescription drug abuse. Local reporters often cover take back events because they offer good visuals and are a community interest story.

One week before the event:

1. Send a media advisory to local news stations (TV and radio) and local newspapers. It should include a brief rationale for and description of the event, location, time, and who will be available for an interview. See Appendix A for a sample of a media advisory.
2. Designate at least one spokesperson to speak to the media at the event. Prepare a few talking points to use when interviewed by a reporter.

One day before the event:

1. Call your media contacts to ensure they have received your advisory and find out if they plan to attend the event.
2. Finalize and prepare press packet and press release. The press release should describe your event and include details about why the event is important, such as rates of prescription drug abuse, poisonings, environmental concerns, etc. Put your press release in a press packet folder that also contains information about your organization and has your contact information. See Appendix B for a press release example.

Day of the event:

1. Be prepared for media coverage by bringing press packets to give to any reporters who attend your event.
2. Remind reporters to avoid recording any identifying information on the collected medications.
3. Collect business cards or contact information from the reporters to find your news story later.

## **VI. Promoting Your Event**

Advance planning is the key to successful promotion of a take back event. To advertise your take back event to everyone in the community, it is best to use multiple avenues, such as social media, radio spots, newspaper ads, and flyers at schools, pharmacies and local businesses. Promotional ideas for your take back event are listed below:

- Flyers posted in local businesses, schools, and pharmacies
- Stickers placed on prescription packaging or printed inserts/strips of papers given out with prescriptions
- Social network pages (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) for your organization, law enforcement agency, and other community organizations
- Newsletter from your organization and other community newsletters
- School newsletter and packets sent home from schools for parents
- Printed inserts mailed with water and utility bills
- Paid advertisements on television and in the newspaper
- Take back information posted on online community calendars and the events webpages of local newspapers
- Newspaper articles and letters to the editor
- Radio interviews or radio public service announcements (PSAs)
- Yard signs around town in the front-yard of homes and lining the street at the take back location and billboards
- County-wide all call system with a recorded message about the take back

- Tear-pads at pharmacies so customers can tear off a sheet with all relevant information about the take back
- Interviews on local morning or news shows
- Presentations to local chamber of commerce and other community groups—schedule far in advance

### Flyers

Creating a well-designed take back flyer will be very helpful in promoting your event. The DEA provides free templates on their website and you can easily customize them with your location and organization name. These flyers are great one-pagers that quickly identify the details of a take back event. You can also design your own flyer if you want it to have more local appeal. A simple image search online for “Drug Take Back Event” or “Got Drugs” will result in many examples of take back flyers. Examples of flyers used by Texas take back organizers are included in Appendix C.

### Toolkit Tip:

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Pharmacies are often a good connection to help promote the event. Pharmacies can post flyers or pass out information with prescriptions. When working with large pharmacy chains, remember that you may be required to contact the regional public affairs office to get permission to promote your event through the pharmacy. Contact your local pharmacy and speak with the manager in advance of the event in order to get clarification and allow for ample time to contact the public affairs office if needed.

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## VII. Collecting Data at Your Event

### A. Data Collection

All take back events should collect some form of data because this information can be used to better plan future events and gain additional support.

#### I. Count and weigh the boxes of medication collected.

The simplest method to assess your take back event is to count the total number of boxes of medication collected and measure the total weight of returned medications. The DEA will tally the number of boxes and calculate the total weight of boxes collected at National Drug Take Back Day events and track this information over time. If you plan to weigh your collected medications, remember to bring a scale to the event.

## 2. Survey participants

Another fairly simple way to collect data from your take back event is to survey participants. After participants return their medication, ask them to complete a short survey—not more than 5 questions. This survey must be optional and anonymous so as not to discourage participation. Participants can complete the survey themselves or volunteers can ask the questions aloud and write their answers on the form. Be sure to bring pens and clipboards if you plan to conduct a survey.

The questions you include on your survey should help you assess your take back and plan for future events. You may want to ask participants:

- How they heard about the take back event
- How they normally dispose of medications
- If they would participate in a take back event in the future

It is best to avoid demographic questions to protect participant confidentiality. However, you may want to ask for participants' zip codes to help you determine the reach of your event. Example surveys are included in Appendix D.

## 3. Count and Catalog Medications

A more advanced way to evaluate your take back is to count and catalog all or a portion of the medications that are collected. This method requires a pharmacist (or pharmacy tech or pharmacy student) who can easily identify medications. The pharmacist or volunteer will want to identify whether the substance is controlled or non-controlled, the names of the medications, the quantity that was prescribed, and the quantity that remains. By documenting the quantity prescribed and the quantity remaining, you can then assess medication waste.

You may choose to catalog all medications or you may catalog medications from a small group of cars or small number of participants if that is more feasible. To track the types and quantities of medications when cataloging, you can simply write it by hand in a table/chart or you can use software such as Excel or Access. See Appendix E for a sample cataloging form.

**Important:** If you would like to count and catalog medications, create a written plan and present it to the law enforcement officer and/or DEA agent involved in the take back in order to get approval for your process for sorting controlled substances.



## VIII. Additional Resources

- CADCA's Take Back Guide: <http://www.preventrxabuse.org>
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) National Take Back Day website: [http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal/takeback/](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/)

## APPENDICES

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### Appendix A:

Sample Media Advisory

### Appendix B:

Sample Press Release

### Appendix C:

Sample Promotional Flyers

### Appendix D:

Sample Drug Take Back Surveys and Results

### Appendix E:

Sample Medication Cataloging Tool

Media Advisory  
10/22/2013

Contact: Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth  
Communications Director: 512-442-7501

Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth Partners with Drug  
Enforcement Administration, Texas National Guard, and Travis  
County Sheriff's Office to Take Back Unwanted Prescription Drugs  
on October 26

Austin — On Saturday, October 26, 2013, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth (TxSDY) is partnering with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Texas National Guard Joint Counter Drug Task Force, and the Travis County Sheriff's Office to host a Veteran-focused Prescription Drug Take Back Event as part of the DEA's National Take Back Day. This take back event is open to everyone but is particularly focused on raising awareness about the increasing rates of prescription drug abuse among veterans and military members. Several veterans service providers will be on-site to provide resources and information.

Other Austin-area take-back locations can be found on the DEA's website: [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov)

**WHEN:**

Saturday, October 26, 2013, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Spokespersons available for interview at 10:30 a.m.

- Renada Snodgrass, veteran and VetCorps Veterans Prevention Coordinator, TxSDY
- Carlee McConnell, Research and Policy Analyst, TxSDY

**WHERE:**

Austin VA Vet Center Parking Lot, 2015 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78741

**WHO:**

Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth  
Texas National Guard Joint Counter Drug Task Force  
Travis County Sheriff's Office  
Drug Enforcement Administration

**WHAT:**

A Medication Take Back Event open to everyone and particularly benefiting veterans, military members, and their families. Everyone is invited to bring their unwanted prescription medications for free, safe disposal.

**WHY:**

More Americans currently abuse prescription drugs than the number of those using cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin combined, according to the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Among U.S. military personnel, prescription drug abuse nearly tripled between 2005 and 2008 according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The majority of people who abuse prescription drugs say they got them from a friend or relative. Drug take back events help prevent prescription drug abuse by removing unused medications from the home.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Austin-area Drug Take Back Events Collect Unwanted Medications  
and Raise Awareness of Prescription Drug Abuse**

Austin, TX – October 26, 2013—Today, all across the country, individuals are dropping off unwanted or unused medications at drug take back events from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. as part of the Drug Enforcement Administration's National Drug Take Back Day. Last April, Texans turned in almost 50,000 pounds of medications at over 350 drug take back sites across the state.

In Austin, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth (TxSDY) is partnering with the DEA, Travis County Sheriff's Office, and Texas National Guard to host a veteran-focused drug take back. Prescription drug abuse is increasing nationally, and among military personnel specifically, the rates of prescription drug abuse nearly tripled from 2005 to 2008. Most prescription drug abusers say they get the medications from friends or family members. Therefore, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth encourages everyone to safely dispose of their unneeded medications at a drug take back event.

Prescription drug abuse among youth is also a growing concern and has increased nationally by 33% since 2008. In Texas, about 1 in 5 high school students report ever taking prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription.

Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth is the statewide coalition working to create healthier and safer communities by making alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs irrelevant in the lives of youth. To combat prescription drug abuse, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth created a statewide workgroup to collaborate on prescription drug abuse prevention strategies. Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth is also developing a toolkit to help other communities of any size and with any level of resources hold effective take back events.

Contact:  
Carlee McConnell, MPH  
Research and Policy Analyst  
Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth  
2211 S IH 35, Ste. 201  
Austin, TX 78741  
Office: (512) 442-7501  
cmccconnell@TxSDY.org

# GOT DRUGS?

Turn in your unused or expired medication for safe disposal  
Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013 from 10:00am-2:00pm

Join The Dallas Area Drug Prevention Partnership,  
Dallas Police Department, Dallas ISD Police, Highland Park Department of Public  
Safety, University Park Police, The Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse, 12<sup>th</sup> Step  
Ministry, and the Drug Enforcement Administration at...

**Highland Park DPS**

4700 Drexel Dr.

Highland Park, TX 75205

**University Park Fire Station**

3800 University Blvd.

University Park, TX 75205

**Wal-Mart**

3155 W. Wheatland Rd.

Dallas, TX 75237

**Dallas Fire Station #19**

5600 E. Grand Ave.

Dallas, TX 75223

**Southwest Center Mall**

3662 W. Camp Wisdom Rd.

Dallas, TX 75237

**Richland College**

12800 Abrams Rd.

Dallas, TX 75243

**Dallas Police Northeast Patrol**

9915 E. Northwest Hwy.

Dallas, TX 75238

**Dallas Police North Central Patrol**

6969 McCallum Blvd.

Dallas, TX 75252

**Dallas Police Southeast Patrol**

725 N. Jim Miller Rd.

Dallas, TX 75217

**Dallas Police Southwest Patrol**

4230 W. Illinois

Dallas, TX 75211

**12<sup>th</sup> Step Ministry**

5324 W. Northwest Hwy.

Dallas, TX 75220



# Got Drugs?

Turn in your **unused** or **expired** medication for safe disposal.



A Drug Take Back Event to benefit Veterans, Military, and their families

**OPEN TO EVERYONE**



**Saturday, October 26, 2013**  
**10 AM – 2 PM**

Austin Vet Center Parking Lot  
2015 S. IH 35 Austin, TX 78741

Veteran service organizations will be on-site to provide resources and information.

For more information or to volunteer please contact Texans Standing Tall at 512.442.7501 or visit [www.TexansStandingTall.org](http://www.TexansStandingTall.org)

Prescription drug abuse doubled among U.S. military personnel from 2002 to 2005 and almost tripled between 2005 and 2008

National Institute on Drug Abuse

Event Partners:



**Texans Standing Tall**  
Together creating healthier and safer communities.



**CADCA**  
VetCorps

## Drug Take Back Survey VA Vet Center, October 26, 2013

Please circle your answer(s) for each question.

1. I am a \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Veteran
  - b. Military member
  - c. Military family member
  - d. None of the above
  
2. How did you find out about the Take Back event?
  - a. Flyer
  - b. Email
  - c. Website
  - d. Word of mouth
  - e. Yard sign
  - f. Newspaper
  - g. TV news
  - h. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How do you normally get rid of medications?
  - a. Throw them in the trash
  - b. Flush them down the toilet
  - c. I just keep them
  - d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Would you participate in a Take Back event again?
  - a.  Yes
  - b.  No

## Waxahachie Survey Results

# Rx Take Back Event Participants Questionnaire Results

How did you find out about the Take Back event?

- Newspaper – 58%
- Signs, Banners, Posters – 11%
- Radio – 9%
- School flyer – 8%
- TV – 8%
- Water Bill – 5%
- Other\* – 22%

How do you normally dispose of medications?

- Hold onto – 33%
- Take Back event – 33%
- Trash – 27%
- Flush – 11%

Would you participate in Take Back event again?

- Yes – 100%
- No – None

\*Other consists of: Pharmacy, Work, Internet, Ellis Co., Church, Marquee, Dr. Office, Facebook, Friend, Hope Clinic, Mail and Driving by

## Medication Cleanout™ Survey

Script: Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm going to collect the items you have brought today, but first I need to ask you a few quick questions.

1. Did you bring any sharps (needles, injections, etc.) to us today?

a.  Yes

b.  No

2. What is your home zip code? (postal code)

3. Have you participated in a Medication Cleanout™ event before?

a.  Yes (how many: \_\_\_\_)

b.  No

4. Why do you feel it is important to participate in this event? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What would you have done with these products if this event had not taken place?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you have the number to the Poison Control Center:

Somewhere in your home:  Yes  No

Saved in your cell phone:  Yes  No

Note: During the event hand an event bag to EVERY participant.

Collection Number/Bag Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Surveyor Initials: \_\_\_\_\_



## CV CARES Prescription Drug Take Back September 26, 2015

Family	# of Different Meds	CII	CIII	CIV	CV	DD	OTC	Vitamins/Supplements	Misc.
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
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