

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Using existing systems and collaborating with community pharmacy partners to create and promote medication drop-box/safe disposal locations

CLARK COUNTY, KENTUCKY



Clark County, Kentucky

Clark County is a small, urban community in Central Kentucky that has been highly impacted by opioid overdose. Its systems, including the county jail and a syringe service program, could support adopting proven practices to reduce opioid overdose deaths.

Rate of fatal opioid overdoses

The 2020 age-adjusted opioid overdose death rate in Clark County was 73.5 per 100,000 residents, which was higher than the national rate of 21.4 per 100,000. Age-adjustment is a measure applied to rates that allows communities with different age structures to be compared.

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CLARK COUNTY COALITION



When looking at the Clark County community, there were no permanent pharmacy-based medication disposal options for controlled substances. These are drugs, such as prescription opioids, that are closely regulated by the government based on their potential for misuse and dependence. The nearest pharmacy with a place to dispose of these drugs was about 30 minutes away in a neighboring county. Because public transportation is not available to make this trip, this created challenges for people in Clark County without their own means of transportation.

Two local law enforcement agencies offered to dispose of controlled substances. But many people are not comfortable returning drugs—such as prescription opioids—to police departments or sheriff's offices. So these types of locations are not visited regularly by most people.

Information about the lack of disposal locations was shared with the Clark County Coalition. Pharmacists helped educate members of the coalition about the need for medication disposal for prescription opioid safety and options for increasing safe disposal to be available in their community.

Pharmacists highlighted the following:

- The number of prescription opioids that are not used
- The large portion of misused prescription pain relievers that are obtained from friends and relatives
- The increased chances of medication disposal when it is recommended by a healthcare provider, such as a pharmacist, and when the disposal site is in a convenient location, such as a community pharmacy



Challenge: How to create and promote medication drop-box/safe disposal locations

The Clark County Coalition saw the lack of convenient disposal options as a large gap with a high priority. Members also talked about medication take-back events held by law enforcement agencies. But low attendance at these events further

emphasized the need for permanent disposal options for prescription opioids that are placed in convenient locations.

Based on the limited number of medication disposal locations and the fact that those available were associated with law enforcement, the community set a goal to increase the number of safe disposal locations within Clark County.



Strategy Approach: Use existing systems and collaborate with community pharmacy partners

The Clark County Coalition identified possible priority community pharmacies as disposal sites based on their location and which patients they serve. Priority selection looked at people who are underserved and the convenience of locations. Coalition members who could help communicate with possible pharmacy partners were also identified.

Team members contacted all community pharmacies in Clark County—beginning with the priority locations—by phone, email, mail, virtual meeting, or in-person visit—with information about pharmacy-based disposal drop-boxes, an offer to provide a disposal drop-box and supplies, and instructions for ordering them. Team members worked closely with pharmacy owners, corporate offices, and pharmacy technicians to make the ordering process easier for all pharmacies that accepted. This included providing technical assistance when registering with the DEA to be able to collect controlled substances. Changing the DEA registration was a barrier in many locations, so team members worked

with pharmacies to simplify the process.

The following resources and support were also provided:

- Training on the disposal drop-boxes was offered to all pharmacy partners by virtual meeting, in person, or using a brief recorded video
- Follow-up calls or visits were made one month after the drop-box was installed and then every 3 months to identify challenges, report success, and offer assistance
- Public service radio announcements and ads in local publications promoted the importance of prescription opioid disposal and locations for disposal in the county
- Posters and bags encouraging medication disposal were placed in public locations, such as the public library, courthouse, and health department
- Community pharmacy partners reported new people visiting their pharmacy to use the disposal drop-box because of these efforts
- The Coalition looked at options for funding disposal drop-boxes over time and identified a local organization as a source for financial support
- Staff shared this information with pharmacy partners and also talked about the future costs and needs related to the drop-boxes, such as training, materials, and answering questions



It's a responsible thing to do for the community and there's always positive feedback from any patient who sees it.

—Local independent pharmacy owner and Clark County partner

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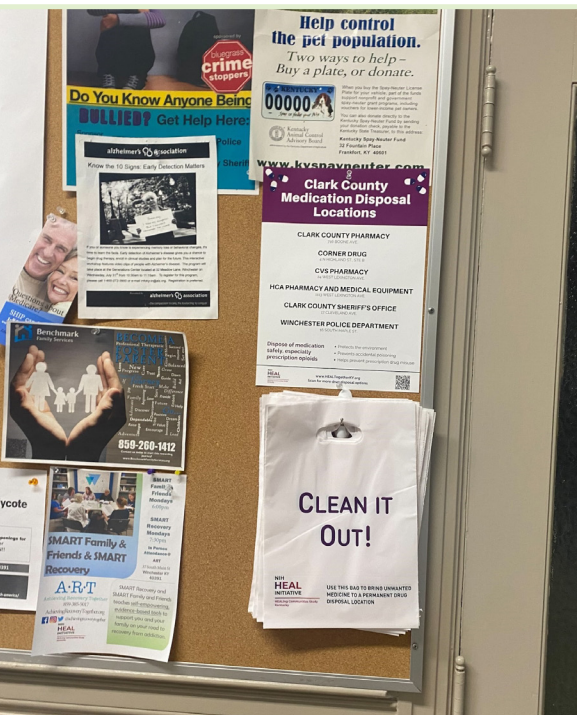


OUTCOMES AND OTHER BENEFITS

- We installed drop-boxes in four community pharmacies in Clark County (three independent pharmacies and one chain pharmacy). This exceeded our goal to have a permanent drop-box in about a third of community pharmacies in a county or one drop-box available for every 25,000 county residents.
- Two of the three priority locations identified by the coalition members agreed to install a drop-box. In interviews, participants reported that doing this did not create a big burden on pharmacy staff, the drop-box was convenient, and providing this service to their community was rewarding.
- The Coalition approved this approach in October 2020 and as of May 2023, the pharmacy partners in Clark County had returned 767 lbs. of medication to be incinerated, indicating that the approach is being sustained successfully.

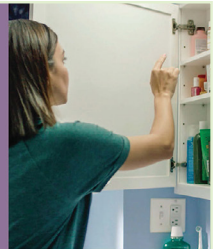
“ It's very user friendly, it's just been really great actually. It's very convenient for our customers.
—Clark County partner pharmacist

“ It's been really good ... just being able to provide another service that people ask for so often.
—Clark County partner pharmacist



Dispose of medication safely, especially prescription opioids

- Protects the environment
- Prevents accidental poisoning
- Helps prevent prescription drug misuse



www.FDA.gov/DrugDisposal

Clark County Medication Disposal Locations

Clark County Pharmacy
716 Boone Ave.

HCA Pharmacy and Medical Equipment
1113 West Lexington Ave.

Corner Drug
4 N. Highland St., Suite B

Clark County Sheriff's Office
17 Cleveland Ave.

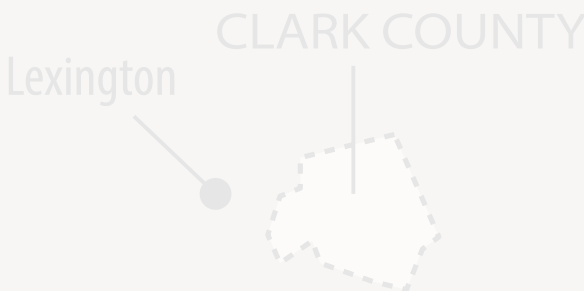
CVS Pharmacy
24 West Lexington Ave.

Winchester Police Department
16 South Maple St.

You can help keep your family and community safe. Get rid of any unused or expired prescription opioid pills, patches, or syrups to help save lives.

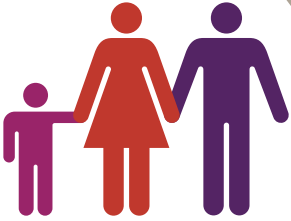


www.HealTogetherKY.org



TIPS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

LESSONS LEARNED



- Overcoming barriers, such as cost and lack of information, increases acceptance of installing disposal drop-boxes in community pharmacies.
- The amount of medication that's been collected and destroyed from Clark County shows the previously unmet need for convenient disposal locations in this community.
- Community pharmacy partners can successfully carry out programs to increase prescription opioid safety when given the resources to overcome barriers.
- Promoting medication disposal and locations in a community using radio and newspaper ads can lead to increased use of disposal drop-boxes.

