

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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State leaders support community efforts to stop overdoses; highlight the expansion of local drug Take Back sites

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Jack Dalrymple and First Lady Betsy Dalrymple, along with Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem, pharmacy leaders, and Department of Human Services officials visited Dakota Clinic Pharmacy in Fargo today to raise awareness about local efforts to stop overdoses and prescription drug abuse by expanding prescription drug Take Back sites.

The pharmacy, at 1702 S University Dr., participates in the North Dakota Board of Pharmacy’s medication disposal program and is active in other community efforts to prevent opioid abuse and overdose.

“Prescription opioid and heroin abuse and overdoses are impacting families and communities across our state, and it is important that we all work together to address this issue, help those affected and save lives,” said Gov. Dalrymple. “The Take Back Program is a vital tool in our efforts to combat abuse and overdoses, and the expansion of this program to include pharmacies is an effective way to partner with communities to dispose of unused medications, especially controlled substances. We all need to do our part to make a difference in this effort, and the Stop Overdose campaign is helping to promote community awareness and response.”

Stenehjem said community support for prescription drug Take Back programs continues to grow and is expected to double this year – a promising development in the battle to overcome opioid and heroin abuse.

“Since 2009, North Dakota’s Take Back Program has been an effective means for preventing unused medications from being diverted or misused,” said Stenehjem. “One pill at a time, North Dakotans are helping to keep dangerous drugs off the streets and out of our landfills. The extent of community support for this program has been phenomenal.”

Behavioral Health Division Director Pamela Sagness said North Dakotans understand the toll prescription drug and opioid abuse is taking on our communities, but they are not always sure what they can do as individuals.

“Sixty-eight percent of the individuals who abuse prescription pain relievers obtain them from a friend or relative. To stop overdoses and prevent prescription drug abuse, we can start in our homes and communities,” Sagness said.

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Utilizing Take Back programs is an action we can all take and is one of the goals of the statewide Stop Overdose campaign, Sagness said.

Mark Hardy, Executive Director of the North Dakota Board of Pharmacy, described how pharmacies are key partners in the fight.

“The Board of Pharmacy has provided an opportunity for North Dakota pharmacies to offer a prescription drug disposal program through the Yellow Jug Old Drugs program,” he said. “Participating pharmacies are providing access to a safe and secure way for their patients to dispose of controlled substances. This can reduce the amount of medications in a patient's residence to assure they are not diverted or misused.”

Take Back and Yellow Jug Old Drug medication disposal program sites are listed on the attorney general's website at www.ag.nd.gov/PDrugs/TakeBackProgram.htm.

Pharmacies interested in becoming a Yellow Jug Old Drug site can find information and an application at www.nodakpharmacy.com/disposal.asp.

If a local Take Back location is not available, people can find instructions on how to safely dispose of prescription medications on the North Dakota Board of Pharmacy's website at <https://www.nodakpharmacy.com/disposal.asp> or by contacting their pharmacist. Prescription drugs should not be flushed down the toilet or drain.

For free resources, including information on effective community prescription drug and opioid abuse prevention, please visit <https://prevention.nd.gov/stopoverdose> or contact the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Prevention Resource and Media Center at 1237 W. Divide Ave., Suite 1D, Bismarck, N.D. 58501, 701-328-8919, or ndprmc@nd.gov.

The Department of Human Services, Behavioral Health Division, in collaboration with the Reducing Pharmaceutical Narcotics Task Force launched the Stop Overdose campaign earlier this month. This statewide campaign focuses on saving lives by sharing information and providing resources for those impacted by this public health concern, including prescribers, pharmacists, behavioral health counselors, first responders, family and friends.

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