



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

For Release: May 1, 2018

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Drug Take Back event collects more than 1,000 pounds of medication *New drug disposal bags now available*

Howard County police and HC DrugFree collected 1,098 pounds of unneeded or expired medication on Saturday as part of National Drug Take Back Day. For those who couldn't attend the event, Howard County is now offering a new, simple in-home drug deactivation system.

While the semi-annual Drug Take Back Day is a good reminder for residents to rid their homes of unneeded prescription opioids and other medications, Howard County residents don't have to wait for the event, as there are prescription drug disposal boxes available 365 days a year in police stations and other locations.

For those who may need an alternative to dropping off unwanted medication, Howard County is now offering in-home drug deactivation bags. The bags, which are filled with activated charcoal, can be used to safely dispose of medication by rendering it useless. They will be distributed at places like senior centers, police stations, the health department, and community events.

"Battling this opioid epidemic has required a multi-pronged approach and creative tactics. Distributing deactivation bags is another tool in the toolbox," said County Executive Allan H. Kittleman.

"We want to stress the importance of destroying addictive, potentially deadly opioids and other prescription drugs sooner rather than later," said Police Chief Gary Gardner. "Don't let unused medication in your medicine cabinet fall into the wrong hands."

Nearly one-third of people aged 12 and over who used drugs for the first time began by using a prescription drug, according to data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

"Opioid misuse has truly become a public health emergency," said Dr. Maura Rossman, Howard County Health Officer. "People may not even realize that their unused painkillers—Vicodin, Percocet, OxyContin, Fentanyl—are potentially very dangerous or deadly in the wrong hands. If you don't need them in your home, we urge you to get rid of them."

Permanent drop-box locations include the Northern (Ellicott City) and Southern (Laurel) District Police Stations, which are available 24/7/365, and the Community Outreach Building (Columbia) and Gary Arthur Community Center (Glenwood), which are available during business hours. The Maryland State Police Waterloo Barrack (Jessup) also accepts medication for disposal.

Kittleman has made it a top priority to combat opioid misuse countywide, adding an opioids coordinator at the police department, an opioids administrator at the health department and walk-in screening and referral services at the Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center.

"In addition to drug take-back opportunities, we worked with the Aetna Foundation to put Narcan in public AED boxes and launched a multi-agency website with information about prevention, treatment and recovery and. There's still more work to do, but we're committed and will keep at it," Kittleman said.

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