

King County Secure Medicine Return

Board of Health Final Report

November 2021

Overview

In 2013 King County Board of Health took a significant remaining step towards reducing preventable deaths from drug overdoses by passing Secure Medicine Return Regulations and establishing a program for King County residents to safely dispose of unwanted medicines. Legislation was developed through a year-long process where a subcommittee of the Board consulted with stakeholders, examined barriers to medicine return in the county, and developed a proposed industry funded and operated product stewardship policy which was adopted unanimously by the full Board.

The 2021 Annual Report summarizes the status of King County's Secure Medicine Return Program and the transfer of the county's medicine collection program to the Washington State Drug Take-Back Program.

King County Program

First in the nation to implement an industry funded and operated product stewardship program, King County set the standard for medicine collection programs in Washington State and nationally. In its entirety or in part, Secure Medicine Return Regulations were adopted by other counties and states to establish an industry funded stewardship program in their jurisdictions.

Drug companies who manufacture and sell covered drugs in or into King County are required to participate in and fund King County's product stewardship program. To date there are 430 participating drug companies, including trade association members from the Pharmaceutical Researchers and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), Generic Pharmaceutical Association (GPhA), Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) and the Consumer Health Care Products Association (CHPA) and drug producers that are not members of a trade association.

Public Health-Seattle & King County and the Hazardous Waste Management Program ensure compliance with Secure Medicine Return Regulations and program safety. The drug-industry stewardship plan operator, MED-Project, operated in accordance with its proposed stewardship plan, approved by King County as meeting the requirements of the Secure Medicine Return Regulations.

To keep families and communities safe and reduce accidental poisonings, residents are encouraged to safely dispose of the medicines they no longer need at a Secure Medicine Return drop-box located throughout King County. Participating pharmacies and law enforcement

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offices voluntarily host a drop-box at their location and must meet regulatory requirements and standards to be eligible to participate. All eligible pharmacies and law enforcement offices can volunteer to participate in the program and host a drop-box, even if the number of collection locations meets or exceeds Secure Medicine Return convenience standard requirements. There is no cost to residents to use this service.

Medicine Collection in 2021

Program Status During COVID-19

Medicine collection continued during COVID-19. Residents were able to dispose of unwanted medicines at participating pharmacy locations as they would prior to COVID-19. Many law enforcement offices temporarily closed its public spaces where drop-boxes are located and are not currently collecting medicines. The drug-industry product stewardship plan operator, MED-Project, continued to provide services following safe COVID-19 practices and adherence to local King County COVID-19 guidelines. Common carriers continue to provide transportation services for both mail-back envelopes and pharmacy packages.

Participating Collection Locations

In 2021, a total of 198 medicine collection locations were in place throughout King County, 115 percent above the minimum requirement under King County's regulations. Drop-boxes are located at participating retail, hospital and clinic pharmacies and law enforcement offices. In 2021 additional drop-box locations were safely added during the COVID-19 pandemic at participating pharmacy locations throughout King County. Due to COVID-19, police departments in most cities are temporarily limiting access to their facility and are not collecting medicines during the pandemic.

Since the start of the program, cumulatively King County's Secure Medicine Return Program collected over 115 tons of unwanted medicines from residents of the county.

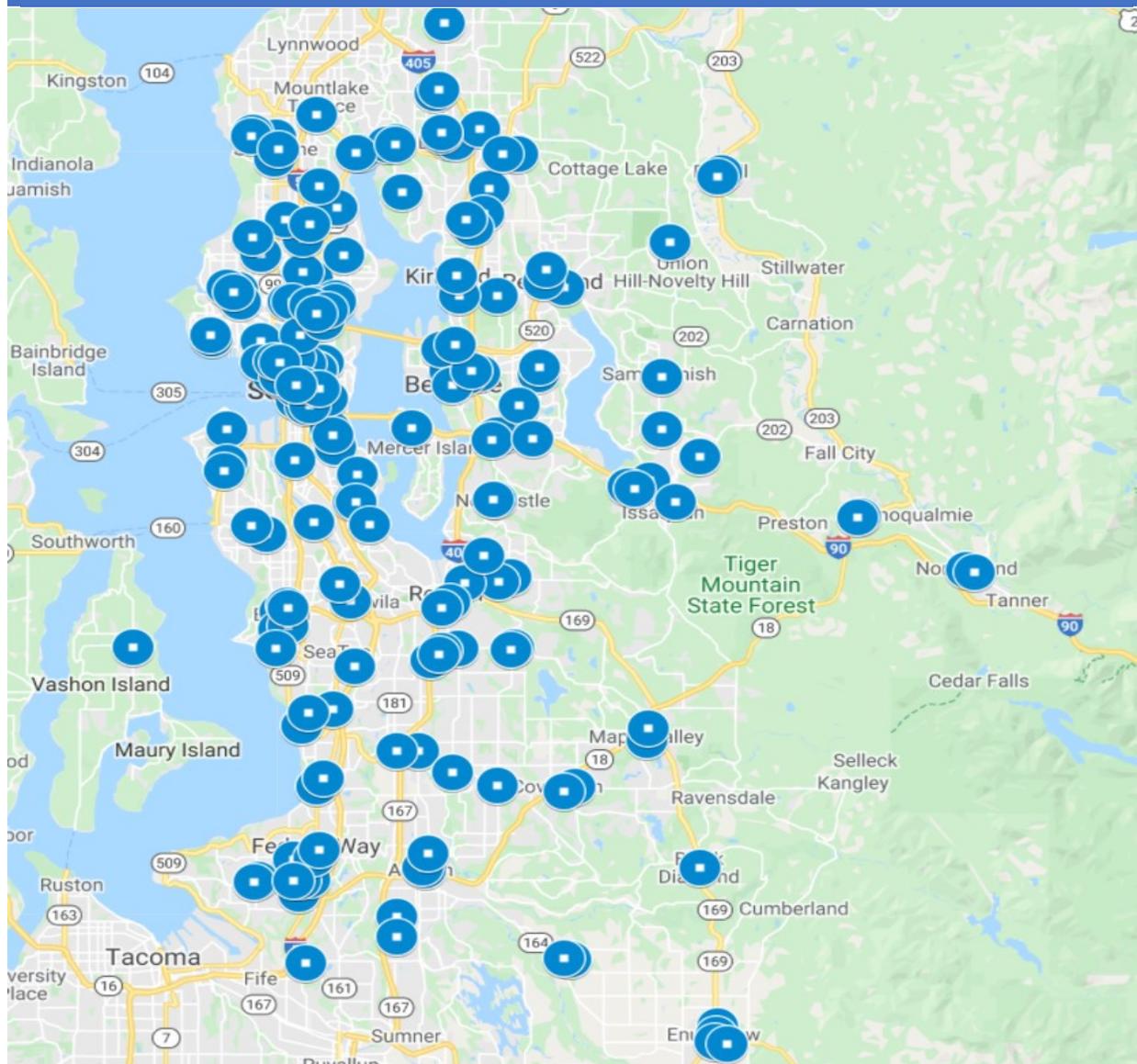
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Collection Meets or Exceeds King County Secure Medicine Return Convenience Standard

The number and distribution of collection locations meet or exceed the regulatory requirements of the convenience standard of one drop-box for every city, town, and unincorporated area of the county and one additional drop-box for every 30,000 residents in each of these areas. Drop-boxes are geographically distributed throughout the county to assure service is convenient and accessible to all residents in King County.

Geographic distribution of 198 drop-box locations providing accessible and equitable collection



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Washington State Department of Health Drug Take-Back Program

On June 7, 2018 Washington State Legislation passed HB 1047 creating a Drug Take-Back Program for all counties in Washington State. Effective August 1, 2019, Washington State Department of Health regulations required an industry-funded product stewardship program to collect and dispose of unwanted household medicines from residents in each county of Washington State. The State's medicine collection program is currently operational in Washington State counties without an established county-operated medicine collection program.

On November 21, 2021 King County Secure Medicine Return will cease implementation and enforcement of the King County Board of Health Secure Medicine Return Regulations and will fully transfer its Secure Medicine Return Program to Washington State Department of Health Drug Take-Back Program. When transferred, regulatory compliance and operations oversight of medicine collection and disposal in King County will become the responsibility of the State Department of Health.

The number and geographic distribution of collection locations established through King County Secure Medicine Return Program will remain available to continue operating under the State's drug take-back program.

The Washington State Department of Health Drug Take-Back Program is currently legislated to end on January 1, 2029 (RCW 43.131.423). Additional legislative action would be necessary for continuation after that date.