

## Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

### Safe Disposal Work Group Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2025 – via Zoom

#### **Present:**

Sunny Linnebur and Cary Ruble, Co-chairs

Aminta Bhutani, Drug Enforcement Administration

Ashley Scollard, Douglas County

Michelle Wilson, Adams County

Misty Zanolini, Las Animas Huerfano Counties Health Department

Erin Cowett, Alamosa County

Dalia Dorta, NeoComoPromo

Lacy Capre-Archuleta, S. Copeland

CDPHE: Teresa Will, Jericho Dorsey

Consortium: Gina Olberding, Hilary Bryant, Jessica Eaddy, Shayna Micucci, Michael Davidson,

Eric Barker, Rosemarie MacDowell

**Absent:** See attached list

Co-Chair Sunny Linnebur called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. Program Manager, Hilary Bryant, provided an overview of the Consortium's history.

#### **Approval of Minutes:**

A motion was made to approve the July 2024 meeting minutes. Motion approved.

#### **Introduction to the Safe Disposal Work Group and 2025 Goals (Sunny Linnebur):**

Sunny summarized the work group's ground-level efforts, which began in 2014 before the Colorado Takeback Program and DEA takeback events were established. Sunny's work at the university focuses on the geriatric population, which typically utilizes many medications.

Currently, the DEA holds medication takeback events twice a year, and sites include law enforcements locations. The State of Colorado also has a program managed by Cary Ruble, who is also the Safe Disposal Work Group co-chair.

One of the work group's goals last year was to collaborate with organizations such as the Colorado Veterinary Association to increase education about the disposal of pet medications. Some of the veterinary medications, including injectables, are considered controlled substances. Plans for 2025 include meetings with public health agencies and The Colorado Pharmacists Society. The work group will also be reaching out to hospice organizations to assist with their needs for disposal of medications used by patients who have passed away.

Gina Olberding cited a recent CDC overdose death report that showed a nationwide decrease in overdose deaths, but an increase in overdoses for the over 65 population (and the Black and Native American populations). Decreases have been attributed to treatment and harm reduction efforts, including the use of naloxone. CDPHE data shows similar data. The State Epidemiologic Outcomes Workgroup also maintains regional overdose data:

<https://www.coloradoseow.org/>

Sunny said overdose deaths in older adults are usually due to combination therapies such as benzodiazepines combined with another drug that then causes respiratory depression. Rates at UC Health are much lower than the national average.

Sunny suggested the data could inform the work group's efforts to collaborate with both the Provider Education and Public Awareness work groups in areas such as provider and caregiver education.

Sunny and Aminta Bhutani pointed out that it's necessary to search the Colorado takeback program locations and the DEA takeback locations separately in order to find all disposal sites. The next DEA takeback event is on April 20th. Future takeback events might depend on changes in federal funding. [www.deatakeback.com](http://www.deatakeback.com)

### **CDPHE Medication Take-back Program Update - History, Current Status, and Future Plans (Cary Ruble):**

Cary has worked for the State of Colorado for approximately 11 years. He assumed the role of Medication and Sharps Takeback Program Manager six months ago. Cary first became involved with the program in 2016 when legislation codified the medication program in state statute and provided funding for CDPHE to develop regulations. A copy of the slide presentation is attached to the minutes. Presentation summary:

The program mission is to protect Coloradans from the risks associated with improperly disposed household medications and sharps, to combat prescription drug misuse, and to protect the environment by providing free, accessible, and secure disposal locations for unused household medications and proper needle disposal through the administration of a sharps program. The program utilizes three collection methods: medication disposal kiosks, sharps disposal kiosks, and sharps mail back containers. Cary described how all three methods function.

There are 174 medication kiosks open to the public for disposal of household medications. The kiosks are located throughout the state in 61 of the state's 64 counties. A map of locations is available on the [www.takemedsseriously.org](http://www.takemedsseriously.org) website. There are another 186 facilities located in the state that also collect medications, but they are not part of the state program. The map includes both the state and independent collection locations (including places like CVS, Safeway, and Walgreens).

Cary reviewed the amount of medications collected as well as the disposal costs, which have remained relatively stable between \$3 and \$5 per pound. It is expected that for this fiscal year the program will collect approximately 75,000 pounds of medications.

The sharps program currently has kiosks in 22 locations throughout the State. Most of the kiosks are located along the Front Range near in Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, and Fort Collins. There is a single kiosk located in Grand Junction. The program employs a third-party transporter. This company provides collection materials and monthly pickups from each location. Sharps are then transported to a disposal facility in Colorado Springs.

Cary reviewed the programs' goals and challenges. One of the initial and primary goals is to maintain the current level of access to statewide medication kiosks, which is the successful part of the program. One of the existing program challenges is reducing the contamination and vandalism associated with sharps kiosks, particularly those located in public parks.

Since 2021, the sharps kiosk program has collected and disposed of about 16,000 pounds of sharps, with an overall disposal cost of approximately \$6 per pound. Disposal costs per pound have remained relatively steady between \$5 and \$7 per pound. It is expected that approximately 8,000 pounds of sharps will be collected in fiscal year 2025, an increase from 6,500 pounds in FY 2024.

Sharps can also be mailed from 159 locations in the state. Most of these locations are within pharmacies and containers are provided to the public at no cost. The number of containers distributed versus the number of containers returned by the public is very low. The return rate has fluctuated between 18 and 36%, i.e., for every 100 containers distributed to the public, only between 18 to 36 of are mailed back. As a result, disposal costs are very high (in excess of \$80 per pound). The mail back portion of the program has collected about 5,000 pounds of sharps, with an overall return rate of about 36%. This program will either have to be restructured or eliminated due to the high costs associated with the low return rate.

#### Comments/questions:

Michael Davidson asked if there is a promotional budget for the sharps program and if CDPHE has considered program promotion. Cary said there isn't a specific promotion budget, but this subject could be discussed further.

Work group members discussed kiosk vandalism and kiosks that are used for the disposal of garbage. Kiosks located in supervised areas (such as harm reduction centers) are not vandalized or used inappropriately. Vandalism usually occurs in unsupervised public places. Placing garbage disposal containers adjacent to medication disposal kiosks might prevent garbage from being placed in the medication kiosk. Sunny said the issue of trash disposal has been a consistent problem since the program inception. A re-evaluation of the kiosk locations might be necessary.

Sunny said that Kaiser facilities have the highest volume of medication collection. Initially Kaiser paid for the kiosks, but they are now part of the state program.

Cary encouraged work group members to email him with ideas regarding the kiosk program: [cary.ruble@state.co.us](mailto:cary.ruble@state.co.us)

Other matters discussed by the work group included updating of the website <https://takemedseriously.org/>. Cary receives calls on a regular basis about the site needing updates. Dalia Dorta noted that the Spanish language section of the website is not opening properly. Michael Davidson said the delay is due to recent updates. Michael will discuss updates with Cary.

Ashley Scollard spoke about the medication collection efforts in Douglas County and will email additional information to Sunny about their programs.

Gina Olberding and Sunny mentioned the importance of messaging to reach foreign language caregivers. Sunny has many patients whose caregivers speak Vietnamese, Chinese Mandarin, and other languages. She suggested it would be useful to add additional translations if the resources are available.

**Adjournment/Next Meeting:**

The meeting was adjourned at noon. The next work group meeting will be held on June 18, 2025 from 10:30 - Noon.

Attachments: Work group roster, Presentation

Links noted in the chat:

Drug Overdose in Colorado: Counts 2000-2023:

[https://cohealthviz.dphe.state.co.us/t/HealthInformaticsPublic/views/Drug\\_Overdose\\_Dashboard\\_All\\_Years\\_No\\_Race\\_FINAL/Story1?%3Aembed=y&%3Aiid=3&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y](https://cohealthviz.dphe.state.co.us/t/HealthInformaticsPublic/views/Drug_Overdose_Dashboard_All_Years_No_Race_FINAL/Story1?%3Aembed=y&%3Aiid=3&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y)

Colorado Drug Overdose Statistics: <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/colorado-drug-overdose-statistics>

CDPHE Sharps Takeback Locations: <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/dehs/medication-sharps-take-back>