

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

Safe Disposal Work Group Meeting Minutes

July 24, 2024 – via Zoom

**Present:**

Sunny Linnebur and Megan Vinet, Co-chairs  
Aminta Bhutani, Drug Enforcement Administration  
Ashley Reid, Children’s Hospital Pharmacy  
Carrick Patterson, Colorado Springs Fire Department  
Lori Lawrence, Hinsdale County Coroner  
Consortium: Hilary Bryant, Jessica Eaddy, Jennifer Mackender, Kristin Carpenter, Michael Davidson, Eric Barker, Teresa Cantwell

**Absent:** See attached list

Co-Chair Sunny Linnebur called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes:**

A motion was made to approve the May 2023 meeting minutes. Motion approved.

**Conversation Colorado EMS Providers:**

(Trends in Medication Misuse, Storage, Accessibility, Disposal Challenges, Education and Gaps, Community Collaboration, Naloxone Training, Stigma and Support)

Sunny Linnebur introduced Carrick Patterson, Battalion Chief, Colorado Springs Fire Department. She asked for comments and information related to medication use, storage, and disposal. She also spoke about the limited resources available to oversee health facility medication disposal, and the state’s medication disposal goal of placing a medication disposal box in every Colorado county.

Chief Patterson said the fire department’s reporting system classifies data into six categories, including an “unspecified overdose” if an individual is unconscious or if evidence is lacking. The unspecified category averages about 38 percent of responses, with most being related to a narcotic. As a percentage of responses, opioids average about 20%, alcohol 17%, medications such as beta blockers and benzodiazepines 15%, synthetic narcotics about 6%, and cannabis about 4%. Synthetic drugs consist of any “off brand.” Most cases are a mix of prescription drugs and medication sharing. Data on the source of opioids is not collected unless it’s recorded as part of the narrative. Local public health may be establishing an opioid response team, which would include drug source tracking. Chief Patterson said that messaging about opioid awareness and naloxone would appeal to the largest audience.

Chief Patterson was asked about common mistakes related to drug storage that lead to accidental misuse, especially by children or pets. Most issues occur when drugs are shared or are left where children and pets can access them, such as unlocked cabinets or improper disposal. Other issues are related to individuals with dementia who are unable to safely use their medications without assistance or the drug sharing that occurs during parties.

Michael Davidson mentioned that messaging about the dangers of drug sharing could be considered in future campaigns and would be particularly relevant, given that fake and contaminated pills are contributing to the overdose crisis. Hilary Bryant said this type of messaging could also be used by local public health campaigns.

Meeting attendees discussed current challenges related to the disposal of unused or expired medications. Chief Patterson said the most common violation is throwing medications in the trash or flushing them in a toilet rather than taking the time to drop them off at a local pharmacy collection box. Colorado Springs has not been involved in mail-in disposal; however, Chief Patterson suggested that it could be successful because of the convenience. The fire department receives calls about medication disposal several times a month. They just recently purchased a container for environmentally safe and supervised waste disposal for drugs such as ketamine, fentanyl, morphine, valium, and diazepam. The drug waste is eventually shipped to an incinerating facility. Chief Patterson said that most rural or smaller agencies might not have the funds available for such a process.

Aminta Bhutani said she is not a DEA diversion investigator, but would consult with one.

Sunny asked Chief Patterson to comment on resources the public needs for safe medication use and disposal and whether or not he has encountered any successful community programs or initiatives that address medication misuse or improper disposal. She also asked for recommendations on how the public could be better educated about the availability and use of naloxone.

Chief Patterson said that while the awareness among physicians, pharmacists, and the general public concerning the level of drugs prescribed has improved, there are situations where individuals are obtaining drugs from different prescribers and different pharmacies. He suggested recurring messaging and education about the negative impacts of not disposing drugs properly, and said that foundations and nonprofits tied to overdose deaths seem to have a lot of energy to conquer issues initially, but that it appears difficult to maintain that energy and focus. He said the largest and best campaign in the past decade has been the DEA sponsored national take-back event. Oregon and Washington have legislation supporting drug take-back and other resources. In addition, pharmaceutical companies are required to support these measures. Locally, the pharmacies appear to be the best community resource for drug disposal.

The Colorado Springs Fire Department just launched a Leave Naloxone Behind project, but funds are not currently available to sustain the project (naloxone is left on site after a response). Launching similar initiatives, continuing to work with the state's bulk purchase fund, and public education are the best options. Colorado Springs has Homeward Pikes Peak and some other outreach efforts actively involved in outreach and education efforts. Dovetailing opioid grant programs and partnering with community efforts would be very helpful. Colorado Springs Police (and their Dart Team for homeless outreach) are now carrying naloxone.

Sunny offered the assistance of Consortium staff. Kristin Carpenter said she would contact Chief Patterson.

Chief Patterson addressed the issue of stigma by suggesting that outreach to individuals with SUD that involves educating them about available resources would be one way to reduce stigma.

Hilary Bryant mentioned the harm reduction center located in Colorado Springs as a resource.

Jennifer Mackender thanked Chief Patterson for his insight regarding medication use and disposal and said she would share the information with communities and the Opioid Abatement Council in her region.

### **International Overdose Awareness Day:**

Meeting participants discussed activities planned for IOAD.

### **Program Updates**

Lori Lawrence said she contacted Lynette Myers about a medication drop box for Hinsdale County, but there were none available. She spoke about the limited resources available in the county.

Hilary Bryant mentioned the TakeMedsSeriously campaign and resources that can be downloaded and utilized by communities. <https://takemedsseriously.org/>

Eric Barker said there used to be a take back kiosk at the local sheriff's office in Hinsdale County, but they removed it. Jessica Eaddy confirmed there was a box in the office when she visited, but the staff said no one ever used it. It was not prominently displayed. Lori said she would be happy to help with a replacement collection box. She and Eric will discuss this further offline.

Sunny suggested looking into a medical facility to host the collection box. Megan said she would look into the availability of the state supplying a box.

Aminta said the closest DEA box location is in Pagosa Springs. Eric suggested Gunnison would be more convenient. Lori said she would reach out to the local medical center and Aminta offered her assistance. Questions regarding DEA policy can be directed to [DPY@dea.gov](mailto:DPY@dea.gov)

Jennifer Mackender suggested personal disposal options such as the Detera pouch. Eric agreed it would be worth pursuing.

Sunny said that Detera is a good option, but has limitations in terms of the number of medications that can fit in the disposable pouch. NarcX makes a larger pouch and contains a liquid that renders the drug non-retrievable. Wholesale purchase options are available.

Hilary suggested that Lori speak with her Regional Opioid Abatement Council (ROAC) about using their settlement funds to purchase at home disposal products for their residents since their population is so small.

### **Adjournment/Next Meeting:**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m. The next work group meeting will be held on September 11, 2024 from 8:30–10 a.m.

Attachments: Work group roster