

NEWS RELEASE

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Alabama Attorney
General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALABAMA AG, U.S. ATTORNEYS, STATE HEALTH OFFICER REMINDE THAT PRESCRIPTION TAKE-BACK IS THIS SATURDAY

(MONTGOMERY)--- Alabama's Attorney General, U.S. Attorneys and State Health Officer are reminding people that National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day is this Saturday, April 28. Attorney General Luther Strange, U.S. Attorney George Beck for the Middle District of Alabama, U.S. Attorney Joyce White Vance for the Northern District, U.S. Attorney Kenyen Brown for the Southern District, and State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson have been promoting coordinated state efforts for more widespread participation in this program for the safe disposal of prescription drugs.

This is the fourth National Prescription Drug Take-Back, a program sponsored by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to combat the abuse or misuse of potentially dangerous medicines that have expired or are no longer needed by those for whom these controlled substances were prescribed.

The Alabama Department of Public Health cites prescription drug abuse as an emerging public health issue and the nation's fastest-growing drug problem. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2008, most of the deaths in the U.S. that were due to drug overdoses were caused by prescription drugs. In Alabama, the rate of prescription painkillers sold per 10,000 people in 2010 was among the highest in the nation.

Many teenagers and young people who abuse prescription drugs get them from family and friends or from their home medicine cabinets. According to a survey by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, one in five teens has tried Vicodin, a powerful addictive narcotic painkiller; one in 10 has tried OxyContin, also a prescription narcotic; and one in 10 has used stimulants such as Ritalin or Adderall for non-medical purposes, and one in 11 admit to getting high on cough syrup.

Alabamians will have the opportunity to turn in their old prescription drugs at drop-off points throughout the state on Saturday, April 28. A list of collection sites is available online at the DEA website, www.dea.gov, by viewing a Google map, <http://g.co/maps/q2a9g>, or citizens may inquire with their local police departments and sheriff's offices. The DEA also may be contacted toll-free by calling 1-800-882-9539.

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Law enforcement agencies and interested community partners such as pharmacies, schools, and civic groups have been encouraged to work together to provide as many local sites as possible throughout Alabama. Each site must be supervised by a law enforcement officer due to the involvement of controlled substances.

The call by the Attorney General, the U.S. Attorneys and the State Health Officer has been answered by 50 law enforcement agencies that registered at 71 collection sites across the state – an increase of more than 40 percent participation from October 2011. The success of this event is based upon community partners working with law enforcement to address this growing issue.

“We are pleased that many law enforcement agencies have joined us in being proactive to organize collection programs within their local communities,” said Attorney General Strange. “This is an important and basic step to fight drug abuse and drug-related crimes, by assisting in the removal of potentially dangerous controlled substances from our homes. Many of us have out-dated prescriptions that are too easily accessible to children and others. These drugs can also be the target of home invasions and burglaries. This Saturday, April 28, we are asking the people of Alabama to protect their homes and communities by locating medicines that are out of date or no longer needed, and bringing them in for safe and proper disposal.”

“Proper disposal of prescription medicine is a vital weapon in the war on drugs,” said U.S. Attorney Beck. “It is a weapon that we, the average citizen, can use to battle the abuse of prescription and over-the-counter pills. Join our army to combat this growing drug threat!”

“Abuse of prescription drugs is epidemic in the United States and everyone in the community – law enforcement, parents, teachers, physicians, pharmacists – needs to recognize the scope of this problem and work together to combat it,” said U.S. Attorney Vance. “Participating in the Prescription Drug Take-Back on Saturday will help in several ways. It will draw attention to the widespread problem of prescription drug abuse; provide a safe way to get unused and out-of-date controlled substances out of our homes; and ensure that the drugs will be disposed in an environmentally safe manner.”

“Our highest shared goal is to protect the community. To that end the National Prescription Drug Take Back Program is a very important initiative,” said U.S. Attorney Brown. “All too often unused or expired prescription drugs remain in medicine cabinets and are not properly disposed of. Often times these drugs end up in the hands of those who would abuse their use, sometimes even by the children in our communities. I strongly support the Take Back initiative as a means of keeping our kids and communities safer.”

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"Medications expire and lose their effectiveness," Dr. Williamson said. "Safely disposing of medications at these sites will reduce the risk of drug overdoses and will help protect our families and the environment."

In addition to concerns of potential poisoning, abuse or overdose, it also is important environmentally that medicines be disposed in a proper manner rather than simply being thrown into garbage, flushed away, or poured down drains, as they could contaminate water supplies and cause an environmental hazard.

Alabama's participation in Prescription Drug Take-Back is part of a statewide effort by a coalition of agencies to promote public awareness and education for the prevention of drug abuse. The coalition will continue to reach out to communities throughout the state to address this growing problem. Agencies interested in joining this effort may contact the Attorney General's Law Enforcement Coordinator, Louis Zook, by calling 334-353-1082.

Agencies currently active as partners in Alabama's coalition effort to address prescription drug abuse include the following:

- Alabama Attorney General's Office
- Alabama Department of Environmental Management
- Alabama Department of Mental Health
- Alabama Department of Public Health
- Alabama Pharmacy Association
- Alabama Pharmacy Cooperative, Inc.
- Central Alabama Crimestoppers
- Council on Substance Abuse-NCADD
- Montgomery County Public Schools
- Montgomery Water Works and Sanitary Sewer Board
- National Guard Counterdrug Unit
- PASS, Peers Are Staying Straight
- U.S. Attorney's Office- Northern District
- U.S. Attorney's Office- Middle District
- U.S. Attorney's Office- Southern District
- U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
- Local police departments, sheriff's offices and drug task forces