



Safe Drug Disposal Funding Recommendation: Appropriate \$120,000 in recurring funds to the State Bureau of Investigation for the continuation of safe drug disposal efforts through Operation Medicine Drop, a nationally recognized NC program.

Problems addressed by the recommendation

- **An epidemic of prescription drug misuse:** Misuse of prescription opioids in particular, which sometimes leads to use of heroin (also an opioid), is of epidemic proportions. Each year in NC there are more than 1000 deaths and more than 20,000 ER visits due to overdoses, representing a 350% increase in overdose deaths since 1999, and a 565% increase in heroin deaths since 2010.¹
- **Improper disposal of drugs resulting in overabundance and environmental concerns:** Since 1999 the amount of prescription opioids sold in the U.S. nearly quadrupled, yet the amount of pain reported has not changed.² Medications collected fall into the same waste classification as pesticides, considered hazardous if not properly destroyed, and drugs not properly disposed may end up being misused or discarded in a manner that is not environmentally sound.³
- **Safe destruction of medications is through use of an EPA-rated incinerator,** which costs approximately \$1.50 per pound. There are also costs associated with secure transportation, costs for permanent medicine drop boxes (between \$700 and \$1000), and with law enforcement staffing (SBI as well as local) required to handle take-back events and to maintain drop boxes.
- **Easy access for youth:** About 20% of high school seniors in NC report having taken prescription drugs without a prescription,⁴ and about one in every 20 reports misuse of prescription opioids.⁵ The most common means of youth accessing drugs is through a friend or relative.⁶

Safe Drug Disposal Costs:

- EPA-approved incineration
- Secure transportation
- Law enforcement staffing
- Permanent drop boxes

Operation Medicine Drop

- **NC's initiative with Safe Kids NC, SBI, and law enforcement:** In NC, "Operation Medicine Drop" (OMD) is our state's campaign to safely collect and dispose of unused medicines. OMD is a collaboration of Safe Kids NC (through the Department of Insurance), the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), and local police and sheriff's departments. High profile public drug take-back events are held in the spring and fall, and a network of over 175 permanent medicine "drop boxes" are located in law enforcement offices in 76 counties across the state. All of this is done voluntarily and without charge to community members.
- **Impact and Expansion of Operation Medicine Drop:** 15-20 million doses of unused medications are collected in NC per year by OMD, and NC has been recognized as a national model in safe drug disposal. The goal is to have permanent drop boxes in all 100 counties in the state, and to establish quarterly collection and incineration.
- **Law Enforcement and SBI Role:** Prescription opioid medications are classified as controlled substances, and federal law requires that they be turned over to a law enforcement agency. Many law enforcement agencies in NC have been great partners in Operation Medicine Drop.

For more information

Safe Kids NC at the NC Department of Insurance has a web page on **Operation Medicine Drop** where you can learn about the program, take-back events across the state, and locations of permanent drop boxes: <http://www.ncdoi.com/OSFM/safekids/Operation%20Medicine%20Drop.aspx?sec=omd>

For more information on the prescription drug epidemic in NC, visit the Injury and Violence Prevention Branch's web page on *Unintentional Poisoning from Prescription Drugs* (NC Div. Public Health, DHHS): <http://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/preventionResources/UnintentionalPoisoning.htm>. For national information and data on the opioid overdose epidemic, go to the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/>

The Child Fatality Task Force is a Legislative Study Commission that recommends policy solutions to reduce child death, prevent abuse and neglect, and support the safe and healthy development of children. It is part of NC's Child Fatality Prevention System under Article 14 of the NC Juvenile Code. Since creation of the Task Force in 1991, child death rates in NC have decreased by 46%.

Website: <http://www.ncleg.net/DocumentSites/Committees/NCCFTF/Homepage/index.html>

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¹ NC Injury & Violence Prevention Branch, Division of Public Health, NC DHHS.

² Source: CDC, Understanding the Epidemic <http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html>.

³ Unsafe disposal of medications through burning locally in non-EPA approved incinerators has been reported; this is not a safe alternative as it has the potential to spread incompletely destroyed chemicals as waste that settles into the community.

⁴ Data source: NC 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

⁵ Data source: 2015 Monitoring the Future Survey showing 5.4% of high school seniors reported past year misuse of narcotics other than heroin (includes all opioid pain relievers).

⁶ See National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2011 – 2014.