

Collection sites established for old medications

By Amy Calder acalder@mainetoday.com
Staff Writer

There are three things you don't want to do with unwanted medications: keep them at home, flush them down the toilet, or put them in the trash.

At home, they might be taken by intruders or family; in the toilet and trash, they get into the water system and pose health hazards to humans and animals.

Now there are places people may take their unwanted medications, where they will be disposed of properly, according to police and health officials.

Medication collection boxes have been placed in 12 locations in Kennebec and Somerset counties, and some are accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The MedReturn boxes look much like standing postal boxes. One of the boxes was installed this week in the lobby of the Waterville Police Department on Front Street. The green and blue 4 1/2-foot-tall, 2-foot-wide metal box was bolted to the floor.

"I think it will provide a convenient access point for folks in the Waterville area to come and dispose of prescription drugs," said police Chief Joseph Massey.

The police station is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The boxes were purchased with a grant the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office applied for after collaborating with several groups including Greater Waterville Communities for Children & Youth; Healthy Communities of the Capitol Area; MaineGeneral Health; Greater Somerset Public Health Collaborative; and Healthy SV (Sebastiancook Valley).

Nancy Findlan, prevention director for Greater Waterville Communities, said the \$63,415 grant is being used not only for the MedReturn boxes, which cost about \$1,000 each, but also for educational training programs on proper disposal of medications; and to update a Web-based registry of people who are high users or mis-users of prescription drugs. Pharmacies and others who dispense medicines may consult the registry before issuing them.

Findlan said having the drop-off boxes helps to keep medications out of the hands of youth and others, and potentially keeps the drugs off the streets.

"Prescription drugs have been a big issue, and there have not been any permanent ways for people to get rid of them," Findlan said. "Consequently, what that does is, people keep them in their cabinets where they're accessible to people who shouldn't get them."

Kennebec County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Everett Flannery said law enforcement agencies over the years realized the problem of prescription drugs getting into the wrong hands has been an increasing problem and something had to be done.

Flannery emphasized that people must leave labels on the medication they drop in the boxes so police can identify what it is and where it came from.

"With no label, it's illegal contraband," he said.

He said all of the boxes are in place except at the Somerset Sheriff's Office, as one box was damaged during shipping. That box should be in place by the end of the month, he said.

Amy Calder -- 861-9247

MEDRETURN BOXES

Kennebec County:

Augusta police station, 33 Union St., open 24 hours daily

Gardiner police station, 6 Church St., 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

Kennebec County Sheriff's Office, 125 State St., Augusta, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. M-F

Oakland police, 7 Fairfield St., 8 a.m.-5 p.m. M-F

Waterville police, 1 Common St., 24/7

Winslow police, 114 Benton Avenue, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. M-F

Winthrop police, 15 Town Hall Lane, 24/7

Somerset County:

Fairfield police, 75 Water St., 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. M-F

Madison police, 28 Weston Avenue, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m., M-F

Pittsfield police, 112 Somerset Avenue, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., M-F

Skowhegan police, 225 Water Street, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., M-F

Somerset County Sheriff's Office, 131 E. Madison Road, Madison, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. M-F

MEDICATIONS

Medications accepted in MedReturn Boxes:

Prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, samples, medications for pets, ointments, lotions, liquid medication in glass or leak-proof containers

Medications NOT accepted: needles (sharps), thermometers, blood or infectious waste, medications from businesses or clinics, aerosol cans, inhalers

Note: Labels noting what the medication is and where it came from must be left on container and will be disposed of by police

NATIONAL TAKE BACK DAY

When: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., April 30

people may drop off medications on this day also, at the following locations:

Waterville, Oakland and Fairfield police departments

Winslow Police Department (officers also will pick up meds at homes. Call PD in advance for pickup: 872-5215)

Litchfield Transfer Station

West Gardiner Fire Department

Readfield/Wayne Transfer Station

Windsor Historical Society, at Windsor Fairgrounds

China Transfer Station

For complete list of locations, go to www.DEA.gov

