

## FACT SHEET



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

### Disposal of Unused Medication in Schools

Community and Environmental Health Program  
Office of Program Support

(317) 232-8172 • (800) 988-7901

[www.idem.IN.gov](http://www.idem.IN.gov)

100 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46204

#### **Introduction:**

The Indiana Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Task Force (Task Force) is working to fight prescription drug misuse and diversion in Indiana. In addition to preventing medicine theft, prescription drug abuse, accidental poisoning, and identity theft, proper disposal of medicines also prevents adverse environmental impacts. Pharmacists, educators, health care providers, and waste managers are working to promote safe disposal. As a member of the Task Force, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) is helping to spread the word about alternatives. This fact sheet discusses procedures for schools.



#### **Disposal Options:**

Preferred disposal methods vary based on the given medication(s). School Nurses who are in possession of leftover and unclaimed medications should seek assistance from the school-based law enforcement officer (such as the School Resource Officer), and the school contact for waste disposal.

#### *Controlled Substances*

Under U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) regulations, it is illegal to transport controlled substances or give them to anyone other than a police officer or a person who is under law enforcement supervision. The School Nurse should work directly with the School Resource Officer, who will be able to take proper steps to ensure the lawful transportation and disposal of the substances. The DEA website provides a list of controlled substances at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/schedules/](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/schedules/).

#### *Hazardous Waste*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (U.S. EPA's) Hazardous Waste Pharmaceuticals Wiki site, at <http://hwpharms.wikispaces.com/>, contains information to help healthcare professionals and stakeholders determine whether the pharmaceuticals they discard meet the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) definition of hazardous wastes. Some pharmaceutical waste may need to be managed under federal hazardous waste regulations overseen by U.S. EPA. Inform the school's waste management staff for guidance prior to disposal of hazardous waste. Guidance will vary depending on the amount of total hazardous waste managed by the school (including hazardous waste generated by science labs, art classrooms, etc.). IDEM's Compliance and Technical Assistance staff is available upon request, at 1-800-988-7901 (*toll free*) or (317) 232-8172, to provide free, confidential technical and compliance assistance on hazardous waste management.

#### *For All Other Pharmaceutical Waste*

Local household hazardous waste collection programs, police departments, and pharmacies may accept unwanted medications which are not controlled substances from schools. Some pharmacies sell postage-paid envelopes for the public to mail in non-controlled substances for disposal. A listing of local programs and pharmacies that provide assistance with non-controlled medications is available at [www.IN.gov/idem/recycle/2343.htm](http://www.IN.gov/idem/recycle/2343.htm). Contact your School Resource Officer or local police department to coordinate the transportation of unwanted medications for proper disposal at a collection site.

### When Collection Opportunities Are Not Available

If no collection programs are available in your community, you may need to dispose of the medication. For medication that is NOT a controlled substance and not required to be managed as a hazardous waste, common steps for disposal include rendering the medicine unusable (place liquids in a sorbent such as flour, sawdust or kitty litter or dissolve tablets or capsules in the original container with water and sorbent). Different types of medicine should never be mixed because dangerous chemical reactions may occur. All personal information on prescription bottles should be blacked out to prevent identity theft. Containers should be resealed with lids and/or placed in a heavy-duty sealed bag to keep medications from leaking. Medicine should not be flushed down the sink or drain unless accompanying product information instructs that it is safe to do so. Of course, medicine should not be given or sold to family and friends. Contact your School Resource Officer or local police/sheriff department to coordinate transportation immediately to a safe disposal location such as a solid waste facility. Disposal of medicine in the trash dumpster on school grounds is not advisable unless the dumpster is locked and tamper-proof.

**Waste Minimization:** Schools can minimize waste they must manage by putting measures in place to give medicine back to the family. It may be helpful to remind parents and guardians to retrieve their children's medicines at the end of the school year or when a student withdraws. Having procedures for documenting disposal activities may also help ensure the safe and lawful management of leftover medicines.

**Sharps:** The improper or careless disposal of needles, syringes, and lancets, also called sharps, is a risk to sanitation and sewage treatment workers, janitors and housekeepers, and curious children. Many solid waste management districts, health departments and communities offer safe disposal options for sharps users. If your school needs help with a sharps collection program, you can find a list of local collection programs and links to Indiana Department of Health and U.S. EPA publications on the IDEM website at [www.IN.gov/idem/recycle/2350.htm](http://www.IN.gov/idem/recycle/2350.htm).

### More Information:

- For the Indiana Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force, including Take Back programs for unused controlled substances and links to Task Force partner sites and national experts, visit [www.BitterPill.IN.gov](http://www.BitterPill.IN.gov).
- For a list of controlled substances, visit DEA's website at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/schedules/](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/schedules/). For regulations for the disposal of unwanted controlled substances, visit DEA's website at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov). The DEA Registration Service Center can be reached at 1-800-882-9539.
- For information to help healthcare professionals and stakeholders determine whether the pharmaceuticals they discard meet the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) definition of hazardous wastes, visit U.S. EPA's Hazardous Waste Pharmaceuticals Wiki site, at <http://hwpharms.wikispaces.com/>.
- For some examples of policies and procedures aimed at minimizing waste, visit the *New Mexico School Health Manual* at [www.nmschoolhealthmanual.org/](http://www.nmschoolhealthmanual.org/) and the *Medication Disposal Form* used by the *Glendale-River Hills School District* at [www.glendale.k12.wi.us/district\\_links/board\\_of\\_education/section\\_j\\_students](http://www.glendale.k12.wi.us/district_links/board_of_education/section_j_students). (Policies adopted by Indiana schools should be consistent with applicable Indiana regulations.)
- For local household hazardous waste and medicine collection programs for residents, visit IDEM's Recycle Indiana website at [www.IN.gov/idem/recycle/2343.htm](http://www.IN.gov/idem/recycle/2343.htm) or contact IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance, at 1-800-988-7901 (*toll free*) or (317) 232-8172.

Memorandum

To: Parents  
From: School Nurse  
Date:  
Re: Student Medications at School

In preparation for the closing of the Health Room at the end of the school year, the school requests that all medications (with the exception of asthma inhalers) stored in the facility be retrieved by the student's parent or guardian. These medications will not be returned to the student. Health Room staff will dispose of any medication not picked up by \_\_\_\_\_ Any questions regarding this matter should be addressed to: [Name] [Phone]

MEDICATION DISPOSAL FORM

School District \_\_\_\_\_ School Year \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Student	Medication	Amount Disposed	Witness