

# PHARMACY SAFE STORAGE

PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS

STARTS WITH  
**one**

Washington State  
Health Care Authority

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**Thank you for your important partnership in launching Washington State's statewide pharmacy-based safe medication storage program! The Washington State Health Care Authority is excited to partner with your pharmacy to increase the number of people who lock up their medications.**

We have learned through our work on the Starts with One opioid misuse prevention campaign that although people know they should lock up their medications, only about 30% of people surveyed actually do. We believe your influence can make a big difference!

This program is designed to leverage the power of personal conversations and commitments to drive positive behavior change.

The program combines three key ideas:

- A conversation between you and your customers about locking up opioids
- Distribution of a free locking device (medication locking bag or prescription locking bottle) to people who need one
- A visible commitment that customers make to lock up their meds (pledge wall)

## **DURATION**

The program will begin in March 2025 and run through June 2025. Promotional materials will be emailed to pharmacies and mailed the month before the start of the program so that you can begin promotion and raise awareness among partner organizations and clinics in your area.

## **GOAL**

The goal is to get more people to lock up their medications while they have them at home to reduce the risk of opioid misuse – whether that be with a free locking bag or bottle that you provide them or a locking device that the person already has in their home.

## **YOUR ROLE**

By participating in this program, you are setting a powerful example for other pharmacies and communities about how we can all make a positive difference in the opioid crisis. If this program is successful, it may be replicated in other communities and beyond. You will be a leader in an important effort to keep families safe.

- You act as a **trusted source** for your customers and community members – sharing information about opioid misuse in your area and informing your peers about the important steps they can take to protect their loved ones and the people in their community.
- You act as an **accountability buddy** for your customers and community members – checking in with them and asking for their commitment to join your cause, to decrease the amount of prescription medication misuse in your community and future generations in your community.
- You act as a **leader** in your industry and in your community to show positive action in one of our country's most significant public health issues.

## SUPPORTING MATERIALS

At the start of the program we will send you all of the materials listed below, including a supply of locking bags and bottles for your customers that receive opioid medications, at no cost to you to help you share information about the program and ask customers if they'd like to participate.

Program posters, rack cards, pledge forms and research consent forms will all be printed and mailed to you along with the locking devices before the program starts. We will also email you social media posts and a program fact sheet that you can share within your local community. If you are missing any of the materials listed below you can download them at [GetTheFactsRx.com/pharmacy](https://www.getthefactsrx.com/pharmacy), or reach out to [PharmacyProgram@wearedh.com](mailto:PharmacyProgram@wearedh.com).

- Program **fact sheet** to inform local providers about the program
- Program **poster** to post in your pharmacy to promote program
- **Research consent form** to follow up with customers who make the pledge to track participation
- **Social media posts** for publishing during the program period
- **Pledge forms** to display on the pharmacy wall with customer's commitments to locking up their opioid medications
- **Conversation steps** to provide easy ways for you to ask customers to participate in the program (included in this document)
- **Customizable press release** for your pharmacy to use to promote your involvement in the program
- A pharmacy **standee** to set up in your pharmacy to promote the program to customers

## CONVERSATION STEPS

Below we've outlined the basic steps for talking with patients who receive opioid medications.

### 1. Share about the importance of locking up your meds with your patients who receive an opioid prescription.

At the point of dispensing, a conversation could look like this:

- Pharmacy staff member: This is a prescription that should be locked up in your home. Nearly half of opioid misuse is from someone taking someone else's prescription. Do you have a place you can lock this up?
- Patient: yes or no

### 2. Ask your patients to commit to locking up their meds and provide a locking bag if they need one.

- If "yes" .... Staff: That's great. Can you commit to keeping this prescription in your safe when you get home?
- If "no" .... Staff: I can provide you with a free locking bag or bottle if you can commit to keeping your prescription locked up in it at home. Would you be able to do that?

### 3. Ask your patients to sign an “i lock up my meds” pledge for other patients to see their commitment to the cause.

We know from behavior change research that the act of making a personal commitment is much more likely to translate into behavior change. One important step to ensure this is to make the commitment visible to others.

Ask patients to sign their **first name or initials only** on a small pledge form that will be posted on the pharmacy wall. No one should sign their full name for confidentiality.

Over time, the display of many people making their commitment public will help to drive and support a new social norm around safe medication storage.

### 4. Ask your patients to sign a research consent form so we can send them a brief follow-up survey.

Regardless if the person takes a locking device or signs the pledge, we want to be able to understand why they may or may not be locking up their opioid medications.

To collect that data, we ask that you invite any person who receives an opioid prescription to sign a research consent form that allows us to follow up with them to gain feedback about the program and any barriers they may be facing when locking up their prescriptions.

- If a person takes a locking device... Staff: As part of receiving a free locking bag/bottle, you'll get a call or text survey from researchers we are partnering with on this program. We've been working together to fight the opioid crisis, and any insight you can give them would really help support the program and get locking devices into more hands. Would you be willing to respond to a 5-minute survey in a couple of weeks?
- If a person refuses a locking bag... Staff: We'd love your feedback about our safe medication storage program. Would you be willing to respond to a 5-minute survey in a couple of weeks?

It will be critical to measure the effectiveness of this program in order to sustain funding for it. We need this form completed in order to send customers a 5-minute online survey. More details about this follow in the “Tracking Participation” section of this document.

If someone doesn't want to participate in the program, that's ok. The program is completely voluntary, and we don't want to force anyone to participate who is not willing to participate. If someone doesn't want a locking device or doesn't want to sign a pledge form, then let them know that the option is always available to them if they change their mind and give them a rack card with more information about the importance of locking up their medications.

After your conversation, we suggest you put notes into the patient's profile in your system to internally track which patients have been approached about the program.

If your pharmacy is a safe disposal location, we encourage you to remind your patients to bring back any unused medications once they are no longer needed. This simple reminder can help encourage safe storage and safe disposal norms simultaneously.

## POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

We understand that pharmacists and customers are not always placed in the same situation. For example, a customer may opt for a drive through or curbside pick-up option, or a customer may pick up a prescription on behalf of another person.

Below are how other pharmacies have navigated alternative situations and adapted the program to meet the needs of their customers. If you are facing similar challenges when implementing the program in your pharmacy, we recommend you take a similar approach to those listed below or contact us to help come up with a solution that works best for you and your team.

### SCENARIO ONE

A customer does not physically come into the pharmacy to pick up their opioid prescription, using a drive-thru or outside pick-up option instead.

### SOLUTION

One of the ways that our pilot pharmacy navigated this issue was by having pharmacy staff bring the locking device, pledge form and research participation form to the customer's vehicle when they delivered their prescription. They saw great success with this extra step because it made the process of pledging to participate in the program extremely easy for customers to do, eliminating the need for customers to physically come into the pharmacy to learn more about the program.

### SCENARIO TWO

A customer does not feel comfortable taking the extra time needed to fill out the research form to participate in the program study due to COVID-19 or other factors.

### SOLUTION

The research consent form is also available online and can be accessed through the QR code on the rack card, which will be in the locking bag or locking bottle. Let customers know that they can fill out the research consent form through the QR code once they get back home.

### SCENARIO THREE

Someone else is picking up a prescription for someone, so they are hesitant to sign the pledge for the person receiving an opioid prescription.

### SOLUTION

Before the prescription was scheduled to be refilled and picked up for the customer, the pharmacist would take the time to call that customer and ask if they wanted to sign up for the pledge to receive a locking device for their medication. The pharmacist would then sign the pledge form for the customer and send the locking bag with their prescription when it was being picked up. During that initial call, the pharmacist would also ask if they'd like to participate in the program study and fill out the research form after receiving the customer's consent. This allowed customers who were not physically coming into the pharmacy to still participate in the program and the program research.

## TRACKING PARTICIPATION

To track the effectiveness of asking people to make a commitment to locking up their medications, we need to be able to collect information from participants, as well as people who receive an opioid medication that don't participate in the pledge, that allows us to follow up with them to take a brief program survey.

The research consent form you collect from each person is a critical step in getting feedback about the program. Here's how it will work:

- When someone receives an opioid prescription, ask patients to fill out a research consent form by scanning the QR code located on the rack card. The online form will ask for name and phone number and grants us permission to follow up with them by email after two week of signing the form. You should keep a stack of rack cards on your counter beside you for easy reference. We will also insert rack cards into the locking bags and bottles to ensure that each customer receives one.
- We will also send you a physical research consent form for customers not comfortable with QR codes. We ask that these are collected by you and shared with us at the end of each month through [GetTheFactsRx.com/pharmacy-report](https://GetTheFactsRx.com/pharmacy-report).
- We suggest you collect and compile the consent forms into a bin, and digitally scan the forms at the end of each month, submitting them at the report link above. Then, the physical form should be HIPPA shredded at your pharmacy for the privacy of the participants, and all participants will be given a random identifier, so all survey information remains anonymous.
- During the course of the follow up period, each participant will be sent a brief survey via email to gauge participation and collect general feedback about the program. This is important to measure the effectiveness of the program.

## SUBMITTING DATA

Monthly data allows us to keep track of the great work pharmacies are doing and accurately assess the impact of this project so we can continue to expand the program.

Submitting monthly data comes in the form of a simple 5-minute online form, and you will receive a reminder email at the end of each month.

You will be asked to share **estimates** for the following data points:

- Estimated number of conversations had about the program
- Estimated number of locking devices distributed
- Estimated number of pledge forms signed

You can find the online submission form at: [GetTheFactsRx.com/pharmacy-report](https://GetTheFactsRx.com/pharmacy-report).

This is the same form you will use to upload any physical research consent forms your pharmacy has collected.

## WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

Throughout the program, we'll be checking with you about how things are working and any feedback you might have. This will allow us to adjust as we go, providing you with all of the support you need to make this program a success. You can also find more information about the program at [GetTheFactsRx.com/pharmacy](https://GetTheFactsRx.com/pharmacy).

With your support, we can decrease the number of people who suffer from opioid misuse – not only in your community, but across Washington state and beyond. Thank you for your important work to improve the health of Washingtonians!

Help us prevent future opioid misuse and learn more about the Starts with One campaign at [GetTheFactsRx.com](https://GetTheFactsRx.com).

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Questions? Email  
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