



2010 Program Costs: Snohomish County Medicine Take-Back Program

Costs for the law enforcement and pharmacy take-back programs in 2010 are provided below, and explained in accompanying text. The law enforcement take-back program was customized for local offices. 2010 labor costs for the law enforcement sites reflect the intensive service model used during the first year of the program. Efficiencies are expected for a standardized statewide take-back program with central consolidation points and sites serviced on a standard schedule, rather than "on call."

Law Enforcement

Pounds Collected:	3,096	Number of Collection Sites:	28
One-Time Fixed Costs:	Secure metal containers with locks (~\$685 per secure steel drop box - 28 drop boxes)		\$19,186
	Development of promotional materials (program startup - brochures, mailers, ads, website)		\$11,852
Annual Fixed Costs:	Program promotion (minimal advertising - printing of brochures, postage, ad placements, website maintenance)		\$ 6,911
	Annual Variable Costs:	Collection supplies (boxes, bags, liners, absorbents, tape, etc.)	\$ 2,183
Costs based on volumes 2010	Labor for program management (includes drop-box maintenance and transport to central consolidation point for secure storage)		\$37,362
Costs may vary based on volume collected	Transportation and disposal (law enforcement officers transport medicines to Oregon, where there is a minimal fee for disposal)		\$ 3,250
TOTAL 2010 Law Enforcement Costs:			\$80,744
Annual Cost Per Capita: (2010 Snohomish County Population - 713,335 ² ; includes law enforcement and pharmacies; excluding one-time costs for secure containers with locks and promotional start up)			\$ 0.08

Pharmacies³

Pounds Collected:	3,051	Number of Collection Sites:	54
One-Time Fixed Costs:	Secure metal containers with locks		\$3,412²
	Annual Fixed Costs:	Program promotion (included in standard pharmacy promotions)	---
Annual Variable Costs:	Collection supplies		\$ 604
	Labor for program management		\$1,218
	Transportation and disposal (pharmacies pay disposal companies to transport medicines to facilities in Spokane and Utah)		\$4,335
TOTAL 2010 Pharmacy Costs:			\$9,569

Minimum convenience standards in the medicine take-back legislation proposed in the Washington Legislature would result in 95 drop-off sites statewide. Efficiencies of a statewide system should allow for lower total costs than the Snohomish County model.



"Medicine take-back benefits communities, individuals and families by preventing drug misuse," says Marysville Police Chief Rick Smith. "It's an important strategy for a healthier community and safer environment."

Snohomish County's model program demonstrates how medicine take-back works for our communities. Cities and counties need an active partnership with drug manufacturers to keep existing collection programs going, and to expand the system across the state.



Estimated Cost of a Statewide Medicine Take-Back Program Using the Snohomish County Model

Snohomish County represents one of several possible models for a statewide medicine take-back program. A statewide cost estimate is provided below that extrapolates costs based on Snohomish County's population of 713,335 as compared to Washington's state population of 6,724,540 (2010 data). This estimate does not account for efficiencies and economies of scale, especially in labor costs, that would occur if the Snohomish County model were expanded to a statewide program.

Secure metal containers with locks (one-time cost):	\$213,029
Development of promotional materials:	\$111,728
Program promotion:	\$ 65,149
Collection supplies:	\$ 26,273
Labor for program management:	\$363,690
Transportation & disposal:	\$ 71,503
ESTIMATED TOTAL Statewide Cost in the First Year:	\$851,372
ESTIMATED TOTAL Ongoing Annual Cost:*	\$526,615

*excludes one-time costs for secure containers and locks and development of promotional materials estimated at \$324,757

The following factors may influence the cost of a statewide program:

- **Pounds of medicines collected.** Amount of medicines returned will increase with a convenient and well publicized statewide program. An estimated 198,000 pounds of leftover medicines could have been collected statewide in 2010 by an established take-back system.⁵
- **Number of collection sites.** Extrapolating from the number of collection sites per capita in Snohomish County results in 311 collection sites statewide. The minimum convenience standard in medicine take-back legislation proposed in the WA Legislature is 95 collection sites, to be distributed in every county and in cities larger than 10,000 people.
- **Collection methods used.** Ongoing collection programs provide predictable service, but rural areas and specific populations may also be reached effectively through regularly scheduled take-back events or mail-back options.
- **Changes in Federal Regulations in 2012.** Currently law enforcement must collect controlled substances, but the DEA will issue regulations allowing additional options for the collection of controlled drugs that will make take-back even easier; expected in 2012.
- **Program efficiencies.** A statewide system funded and operated in the private sector by drug manufacturers is expected to have efficiencies that result in lower costs for labor and transportation.

All law enforcement and pharmacy sites in Snohomish County follow secure Washington Board of Pharmacy protocols.

PRIVACY: No questions asked policy.

SECURITY: Secure metal collection bins bolted to the floor or wall, and double locked.

SAFE DISPOSAL: Medicines are collected safely and destroyed by high temperature incineration at properly permitted facilities.

Snohomish County does not allow disposal of medicines in the trash or toilet - these practices contribute to contamination of waterways and drinking water.

Snohomish County is one of only 17 counties in Washington offering temporary medicine take-back programs at limited locations. A few counties have multiple drop sites, but many others have only 1 or a few. Police, sheriffs and pharmacies are struggling to find funds to continue their programs to meet the growing community need. Most counties still cannot afford to start-up and operate a medicine take-back program.



Limited Medicine Take-Back Locations are Working in 17 Counties

The DEA has been coordinating National Prescription Drug Take-Back Days every six months since the end of 2010. These events rely on local law enforcement staff and resources, and will end in 2012 when DEA issues new regulations for collection of controlled substances.

Legislation proposed in the Washington Legislature would create a statewide take-back system by requiring drug producers to incorporate the take-back into their business costs. A cost ceiling of \$2.5 million to drug producers would result in no more than one penny for every \$16 in sales, or about two cents for the average-cost prescription drug sold in the state.⁶

The Snohomish County model demonstrates real experience in a well-run countywide program. However, even the relatively small program costs are not sustainable within local government budgets. A more stable, statewide program is needed with costs borne by the pharmaceutical industry as part of doing business in our state.

1. Controlled substances were weighed in 13 out of 170 boxes in 2010. The percent of controlled substances varied by box, depending on drop-box proximity to locations generating a high number of controlled substances.
2. Washington State Office of Financial Management – Forecasting Division / June 30, 2011, April 1, 2011 Population of Cities, Towns and Counties Used for Allocation of Selected State Revenues, <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/april1/default.asp>, accessed 11/01/11.
3. The pharmacy costs for collection supplies, transportation and disposal were provided in aggregate for the 6 Washington counties participating in Group Health and Bartell Drug take-back programs in 2010. The Snohomish County portion was calculated based on the number of sites in the county. The Snohomish County law enforcement 2010 costs were used to estimate the cost of the secure metal containers with padlocks at 5 pharmacy sites, but those containers were purchased in previous years.
4. 8 additional Bartell Drug pharmacies have begun taking back medicines in Snohomish County, bringing the total number of pharmacy sites up to 13. Some of the 8 sites began operation near the end of 2010, but they are not included in this analysis since they did not collect liquids or containers and would have made little impact on the overall 2010 numbers.
5. Based on per capita pounds collected in British Columbia's 14-year-old Medications Return Program operated and financed by pharmaceutical companies.
6. "a couple of pennies per container" is based on the \$2.5 million annual cost ceiling to drug producers in medicine take-back legislation proposed in the WA Legislature. Comparing \$2.5 million for a take-back system to the more than \$4 billion in annual medicine sales in WA, results in 1 penny per every \$16 in sales, or about 2 pennies per container for an average cost prescription drug.

Snohomish County Partnership for Secure Medicine Disposal

In 2009, the Snohomish County Sheriff, Snohomish Regional Drug & Gang Task Force, Snohomish Health District and Snohomish County Solid Waste created a partnership to address the epidemic of accidental poisonings, overdoses and illegal diversion of medicines.

Since the partnership was created, households in Snohomish County have been able to safely dispose of unwanted medicines, including prescribed controlled substances, at 28 law enforcement offices and 5 pharmacies. These drop-off sites collected 6,147 pounds of unwanted medicines in 2010. Drop-off sites are provided at no charge to residents, are convenient and secure, and protect the health and safety of families and the local environment.



"The secure collection and disposal of unwanted medications is a key part of our drug abuse prevention strategy," said Sheriff John Lovick - Snohomish County, Washington. "We collected over three thousand pounds of medicines in 2010, and need a partnership with the drug industry to keep these collections going."

2010 Law Enforcement Take-Back

28 drop-off sites

Drop-off sites are managed by the Sheriff, Washington State Patrol, Naval Station Everett, and 21 city and tribal police departments.

3,096 pounds collected

4,530 pounds collected January to December 2011 - an increase of 46%.

Law enforcement accept all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, including narcotic pain-relievers and prescribed "controlled substances."

A sampling of 13 boxes of medicines collected in 2010 contained as much as 19% controlled substances per box.¹ New regulations from DEA in 2012 will define additional options for collecting controlled substance drugs.

2010 Pharmacy Take-Back

5 drop-off sites

Drop-off sites are located at Bartell Drugs and Group Health Cooperative pharmacies. Bartell Drugs has now added 8 more sites, for a total of 13 pharmacy sites in 2011.

3,051 pounds collected

Pharmacies accept over-the-counter medicines and prescription drugs, except those that are "controlled substances."

The 2010 law enforcement take-back program was paid for by Snohomish County law enforcement, Snohomish County Solid Waste, and a WA State Department of Ecology Coordinated Prevention Grant awarded to the Snohomish Health District. These state and local funds are uncertain and fluctuate; and they are not sufficient to maintain the current Snohomish County program, or allow adequate education and promotion. A statewide medicine return program could be sustainably funded by drug manufacturers instead of taxpayers.

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