



For Immediate Release:

September 24, 2015

Media Contact:

Anna Fondario

Violence & Injury Prevention Program

(o) 801-538-6201 (m) 801-499-1074

News Release

Utahns Urged to Rid Homes of Leftover Medications

(Salt Lake, UT) – Utah ranks 5th highest in the nation for drug overdose deaths and a campaign is underway to safely dispose of the kinds of drugs that are killing people. The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is urging Utahns to take advantage of the National Take Back Initiative on Saturday, September 26th to clean out medicine cabinets and safely dispose of leftover prescription medications.

Preliminary data showed that in 2014, 344 individuals died from a prescription drug overdose in Utah; an average of 29 people each month. Most of the prescription drug overdoses (84.0%) involved prescription pain medications. The most common prescription pain medications involved in these deaths are oxycodone, methadone, hydrocodone, and fentanyl. Over the past decade, prescription pain medications have been responsible for more drug deaths in our state than all other drug categories, including heroin and cocaine, combined.

“This is a very real epidemic, and it warrants a strong public health response,” said Anna Fondario, UDOH Injury Epidemiologist. “These deaths can be prevented. Educational programs for those at greatest risk, improved clinical care, ongoing data collection efforts to inform prevention and intervention programs, and strong policies have been shown to be effective in curbing this crisis.”

The 2014 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey found that 68.3% of Utahns who used prescription pain medications in the past year reported that they kept leftover prescription pain medications in their homes. Additionally, 74.3% of Utahns who used prescription pain medications that were not prescribed to them reported getting them from a

-More-

Page 2 of 2 – Utahns Urged to Rid Homes of Leftover Medications

family member or friend. When improperly stored or disposed of, leftover medications can be dangerous.

The National Take Back Initiative is a nationwide event sponsored by the Drug Enforcement Administration to encourage people to properly dispose of leftover medications. Take-back events will be held across the state from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, September 26th. To find a take-back event, visit <https://goo.gl/aD7Hb7>.

Permanent collection bins area also available in locations across the state for safe and legal disposal. To find a permanent disposal site, visit Use Only As Directed at <http://useonlyasdirected.org/drop-off-locator/>.

Prescription overdose deaths can be prevented. Tips include:

- Never take prescription pain medications that are not prescribed to you.
- Never take prescription pain medications more often or in higher doses than prescribed.
- Never drink alcoholic beverages while taking prescription pain medications.
- Never share prescription pain medications with anyone. Besides being dangerous, it's also a felony.
- Taking prescription pain medications with other depressants, such as anti-anxiety medications, sleep aids, or cold medicine, can be dangerous.
- Tell your healthcare provider about ALL medicines and supplements you take.

To learn how to prevent prescription drug misuse, abuse, and overdose, visit <http://health.utah.gov/vipp> or <http://useonlyasdirected.org/>.

###

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care and promoting healthy lifestyles.