

EPA Awards Grants to Address Proper Disposal of Unused Medications

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EPA has provided two non-profit organizations more than \$300,000 in grants to develop pilot programs on the proper disposal of unused medications. Every year, many tons of unwanted pharmaceuticals and personal care products enter the environment through consumer disposal to sewage and trash. The University of Maine Center on Aging, Orono, Maine, and Area Resources for Community and Human Services (ARCHS), St Louis, Mo., will receive \$150,000 and \$150,570 respectively.

The purpose of the grants are to develop alternative stewardship approaches to disposal, including "mail back" or "take back" pilot demonstrations. The pilot projects will also include an inventory of the types and quantities of drugs returned. Inventory data could prove useful to the medical community in changing its prescribing practices to reduce the incidence of unused medications.

The Maine pilot will start, implement and evaluate a mail-back plan to remove unused over-the-counter and prescription medications. In addition, the pilot will test the effectiveness of an educational campaign about the hazards to life, health, and the environment presented by improper storage and disposal of unused medications.

ARCHS, a St. Louis based community partnership, plans to create an efficient regional model that removes and disposes of unwanted medications, and informs citizens of related health and environmental issues. The ARCHS's pilot geographical reach is planned to cover five counties and two states that have a population of 2.7 million people and the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. The pilot proposes to have community grocery stores, the Schnuck Markets, serve as the collection sites for unwanted medications over an 18-month period. The St. Louis College of Pharmacy will be involved in the collection and inventory of the unwanted or unused medications.

In both pilots, older adults will be actively involved in the design and implementation of the pilots. These grants are part of EPA's larger effort to protect the health of older adults, who may be more susceptible to environmental hazards, through its Aging Initiative. The Aging Initiative encourages civic engagement to recognize and reduce environmental hazards in their communities.

Grant winners: <http://www.epa.gov/aging/grants/winners/>

More information on the Aging Initiative: <http://www.epa.gov/aging>