

# PHARMACY SAFE STORAGE PROGRAM

TRAINING GUIDE



Washington State  
Health Care Authority

# Table of Contents

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Overview	3
Duration	3
Goal	3
Your Role	3
Supporting Materials	4
Conversation Steps	4
Potential Adaptations	6
Tracking Participation	7
Submitting Data	7

Thank you for your important partnership in Washington State's 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. 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 patients about locking up opioids
- Distribution of a free medication locking bag to people who need one
- A visible commitment that patients make to lock up their meds (pledge wall)

## DURATION

The program will begin in March 2026 and run through June 2026. Program materials, including this training guide, are mailed out 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 of this program is to create a new norm of locking up medication. Your interactions with patients will encourage them 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 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 preventing opioid misuse.

- You act as a **trusted source** for your patients 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 patients and community members – checking in with them and asking them to safely store their medications by locking them up.
- 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

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

Program posters, rack cards and pledge 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 and window clings** to post in your pharmacy to promote program
- **Social media posts** for publishing during the program period
- **Pledge forms** to display on the pharmacy wall with patient commitments to lock up their opioid medications
- **Conversation steps** to provide easy ways for you to ask patients 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 **handout** to educate patients about naloxone
- Locking bags will be pre-stuffed with educational handouts and a pen. You will also receive an additional supply of **rack cards and pens** to keep at your counter

## 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 locked up when you get home?
- If "no" .... Staff: I can provide you with a free locking bag to do so. 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.

- Staff: Would you be willing to sign this pledge with your initials to commit to locking up your meds? These go on our pharmacy wall to help encourage everyone in our community to practice this important behavior.

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 **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 fill out an online 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 fill out an online research consent form that allows us to follow up with them to gain feedback about the program and any barriers they may face when locking up their prescriptions.

- If a person takes a locking device... Staff: As part of receiving a free locking bag, you can opt-in to receive 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 declines 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 is important to measure the effectiveness of this program to sustain its funding. We need patients to opt-in so we can send patients 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. 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 patients are not always placed in the same situation. For example, a patient may opt for a drive through or curbside pick-up option, or someone may pick up a prescription on behalf of a patient.

Below are how other pharmacies have navigated alternative situations and adapted the program to meet the needs of their patients. 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 patient does not physically come into the pharmacy to pick up their opioid prescription, using a drive-through or outside pick-up option instead.

### SOLUTION

One of the ways that our pharmacy participants navigated this issue is by having pharmacy staff bring the locking device, pledge form and research participation form to the patient's vehicle when they delivered their prescription. This adaptation makes the process extremely easy for customers, eliminating the need to physically come in the pharmacy, but still participating in the pledge.

### SCENARIO TWO

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

### SOLUTION

When someone is picking up a prescription on behalf of a patient, still have a conversation around safe medication storage with the individual, and offer a free locking bag for them to take it back to the patient. Rather than asking the individual who is picking up the prescription to commit to locking up their meds, ask them to commit to having a conversation with the patient about the importance of safe storage. Since they are not the patient, they do not need to sign the pledge card, or opt-in to the survey. Once the patient receives the free locking bag that is brought back to them, they can scan the QR code in their bag to opt-in to the research survey.

## TRACKING PARTICIPATION

To track the effectiveness of the program, 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.

In your toolkit of materials, you will have a few copies of an Opt-In Card to leave at your pharmacy counter for patients to reference. This Opt-In Card will have information about three ways to opt-in to the survey, including:

- Scanning a QR code to the online consent form
- Typing in a short URL ([bit.ly/4-WASAFE](https://bit.ly/4-WASAFE)) to the online consent form
- Texting the word "WASAFE" to 509-370-3475 and following the prompts

At the end of your patient interaction, ask if they are willing to receive a follow up survey in two weeks about this medication safe storage program. Let them know that feedback we receive through the survey is a critical part of being able to continuing funding it.

- If they are willing, they can opt-in to receive the survey by filling out an online consent form. The form will only ask for their phone number, and grants us permission to follow up with them after two weeks of opting-in. Survey responses will remain anonymous and cannot be linked back to them.
- To access the online consent form, they can use the Opt-In Card at your counter to scan the QR code or type in the short URL. Or, they can text "WASAFE" to 509-370-3475 and opt-in by following the text prompts.
- After opting in, participants will be sent a brief survey 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).

## WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

Throughout the program, we'll be checking with you about how things are working and will ask for 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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