



NEWS RELEASE

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What Can The Community Do to Help Combat the Opioid Epidemic?

Topeka, Kan. – *The number of drug overdose deaths has never been higher in the United States (US) and over half of drug overdose deaths involve opioids.* The [CDC has released prescribing guidelines](#) to help healthcare providers know when opioid use is appropriate, but what can communities do to help combat the epidemic?

The Topeka, Kansas Community Collaborative on Chronic Pain hosted a **Drug Take Back Event** in July to help eliminate dangerous and unnecessary medications from becoming diverted or misused. At this event, community members can drop off unused medication for safe disposal. Topeka, Kansas is home to approximately 130,000 persons. The Topeka Community Collaborative on Chronic Pain is made up of many supporting agencies in the community, including family service centers, state health department, addiction treatment centers, healthcare organizations and many more. The Kansas Foundation for Medical Care, a partner with the Great Plains Quality Innovation Network, is a Collaborative partner.

The two-hour event was held at a well-known convention center. Via this event, the Collaborative collected nearly 13,000 pills of controlled substances and more than 50 Fentanyl patches, along with a large amount of non-controlled substances (60,000 pills plus 37 pounds of uncounted, non-controlled medication). Collection of these medications will help prevent misuse, diversion and environmental harm from improper medication disposal.

Over 40 Collaborative partners and volunteers united to help fund and host this successful event. Volunteers were needed to help with set up and tear down, direct traffic, collect and count medications and distribute information packets. It is important to allow enough time for skilled volunteers to identify and count controlled substances. Counting pills was time consuming, but considered a best practice for determining the effectiveness of the event. Separating controlled substances from non-controlled substances when reporting on the medication collected gives a more accurate impression of the harm prevented in the community.

[Deterra](#)[®]-brand drug deactivation products were used for disposal of controlled substances. Deterra bags were also distributed to community members for medication disposal at home. This is a fairly expensive option. If funding does not allow for on-site disposal, communities can partner with law enforcement to determine procedures that can be utilized for collection and disposal. The event was well planned and considered a huge success. Community members appreciated that

they did not have to leave their vehicles to drop off their medications for disposal. Many who disposed of medication at this event were elderly and benefited from not having to park and walk into a facility. While a drive-thru system for collecting medications is not required, it is highly recommended. The older community members relayed this was especially helpful.

“This event was an example of what can be achieved when community agencies work together. Within a two hour period of time, we were able to properly dispose of over 75,000 pills, getting unused and unwanted medication out of medicine cabinets, reducing the likelihood of overdose, misuse or improper disposal,” stated Stacy Forgy, LMSW, at Valeo Behavioral Health Care.

As a result of this event, the Collaborative is partnering with the Kansas Foundation for Medical Care to develop a Drug Take Back Event Toolkit for other communities to utilize in planning similar events.

The Great Plains Quality Innovation Network partners with providers, pharmacists and stakeholders in the region to reduce and monitor Adverse Drug Events (ADEs). A specific strategy to advance this work is to monitor Medicare consumer ADE rates on several prescription medications; one being opioids. Learn how you can partner with our team to reduce ADEs by [visiting our website](#).

About Kansas Foundation for Medical Care, Inc.

The Kansas Foundation for Medical Care, Inc. (KFMC) is a not-for-profit organization focused on improving healthcare quality. KFMC is a member of the Great Plains Quality Innovation Network, the Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) serving Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. KFMC is also the Regional Extension Center (REC) and External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) for the state of Kansas. In addition, we contract with many private companies to provide health information technology (HIT) consulting services, quality improvement and review services. Throughout various contracts, our role is to work with healthcare providers and organizations to develop ways to improve the use of HIT and the quality of healthcare provided to all Kansas healthcare consumers. To learn more, visit kfmc.org.

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