



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

July 2, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Proper Medication Disposal Methods

Executive Order 29, issued in the fall of 2014, established a task force on prescription drug and heroin abuse. One component of the task force focuses on educating the public regarding the importance of properly disposing of unwanted prescription medications to reduce harm from accidental exposure or intentional abuse. A common method of disposal is to flush unwanted drugs. The purpose of this memo is to encourage you to provide proper disposal information to parents and to ensure the inclusion of proper medication disposal in the school setting in school division medication administration policy and protocol.

On their Web site, [the Food and Drug Administration](#), outlines several acceptable methods of medication disposal:

- Utilize drug take-back programs. Contact your local law enforcement agency to see if they sponsor programs. Local waste management authorities may also be a resource.
- Transfer unused medications to collectors registered by the United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). To find a collector in your area visit the United States Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Agency, [Office of Diversion Control](#). Examples of collectors include retail pharmacies, hospital or clinic pharmacies, law enforcement locations, mail-back programs, or collection receptacles.

If there are no DEA-authorized collectors or medicine take-back programs in your area, you can also follow these simple steps to dispose of most medicines in the household trash.

1. Mix medicines (do not crush tablets or capsules) with an unpalatable substance such as dirt, kitty litter, or used coffee grounds;
2. Place the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag;
3. Throw the container in your household trash;
4. Scratch out all personal information on the prescription label of your empty pill bottle or empty medicine packaging to make it unreadable, then, dispose of the container.

Additional information on medication disposal may be found in the [Manual for the Training of Public School Employees in the Administration of Medication](#), (Virginia Department of Education, 2006, p. 53).

Please join the effort to keep Virginia's citizens safe and our waterways clean by encouraging the proper disposal of unwanted medications. Please forward the information provided in this communication to your school board members, educators, principals, and parents. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Tia Campbell, school health specialist, at (804) 786-8671, or by e-mail at Tia.Campbell@doe.virginia.gov.

