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City of Columbus to Provide Free Drug Disposal Bags to Public through Police and Fire

800 disposal bags donated to Columbus will be distributed through the city's first responders to safely and responsibly dispose of unused prescription medications

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that his office, through their role in helping implement the Franklin County Opiate Action Plan, secured 800 Deterra drug deactivation bags that will be distributed to the public by the Columbus Division of Police and Division of Fire to encourage safe and responsible at-home drug disposal. The [Addiction Policy Forum](#), a federal policy group, and the [Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board of Franklin County](#) (ADAMH) donated the bags free-of-charge to the city.

Unused or unwanted medicines can be harmful to families, the community and the environment. Prescription medications can be abused if not properly disposed, while flushing them down the drain poses the potential threat of dangerous chemicals entering lakes, rivers, streams and the city's drinking water.

“According to the CDC, the vast majority of heroin addicts say they first became addicted to prescription opioids, so it’s important to encourage our residents to properly dispose of their unused prescription medications in an environmentally responsible manner,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“Today’s announcement is a perfect example of the multi-faceted approach required to fight the drug epidemic: collaboration and coordination with our partners to address opioid abuse and misuse from every direction.”**

According to Deterra, their patented drug deactivation technology offers a simple “at-home chemical neutralization system [that] works safely to deactivate medications by a proprietary activated carbon system. Activated carbon is used extensively in municipal water purification, and is recognized as a universal adsorbent for chemicals in solution.” Depending on the size of the disposal pouches, a three-pack typically sells for \$14.99-\$20.99.

ADAMH donated 500 bags and the Addiction Policy Forum provided 300.

“So many people ask me how they can play a role in helping address the opioid epidemic,” said ADAMH CEO David A. Royer. **“Safely disposing of your unused prescription pills is a simple and extremely effective way to protect others in our community from opioid misuse and abuse. ADAMH is proud to provide medication disposal bags to the Columbus Division of Police and Columbus**

Division of Fire so more residents have access to this safe and easy method of disposal.”

Since the city’s first responders are on the frontlines of the drug epidemic, daily confronting the tragic consequences of overdoses and a host of drug-related crimes, it was determined that the most direct way to distribute the drug disposal bags would be through the Columbus Police Division’s community liaison unit. The community liaison officers, with one assigned to each of the 20 patrol precincts in Columbus, serve a total of 324 community groups and block watches and will help distribute bags at the various community events and forums they attend as part of their regular course of duties.

Officers in the Linden Safe Streets pilot program, which is intended to increase positive face-to-face interaction with community members in Linden, will also look to distribute bags.

“I believe it’s important to fight the opiate epidemic from every possible angle available to us, and these drug disposal bags will be yet another tool our officers can use to get these drugs off the streets. We will provide our Community Liaison officers along with our Linden Safe Streets officers with 700 disposal bags to hand out to those who they identify as being in most need. I would like to thank the Addiction Policy Forum and Franklin County ADAMH for providing this tool free of cost,” said Columbus Chief of Police Kimberly Jacobs.

The Columbus Division of Fire will also be offering the bags to residents they come into contact with. The drug disposal bags will not be distributed directly from fire stations.

“In order to keep unused medication from being misused and abused, the Columbus Division of Fire is taking a proactive step in preventing a potential tragic situation by handing out Deterra Drug Deactivation System bags within our communities. These deactivation bags will allow our citizens to dispose of medications without having to take them to a drop-off location. Further, these bags will also protect our community and environment by providing a safe and environment-friendly way to dispose of unused medications,” said Columbus Division of Fire Chief Kevin O’Connor.

The drug deactivation bags will allow residents to use an easy three-step process that works on pills, patches and liquids. Drugs are placed in the pouch and warm water is added, dissolving a water-soluble inner pod that releases the activated carbon. The drugs are rendered “inert and non-retrievable,” which means, according to Deterra’s website, that the deactivated drugs cannot be “transformed to a physical or chemical condition or state as a controlled substance or controlled substance analogue.” The pouch can then be discarded normally. An FAQ on the use of the bags can be found at <https://deterrasystem.com/faq/>.

Columbus and Franklin County residents also can discard unwanted medications at a number of permanent drop-off locations that can be found at <http://www.swaco.org/196/Pharmaceutical>.

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