

Operation Medicine Cabinet®

Pharmaceutical Take Back Program by Drug Free Collier

Program History: Formed in 2005.

Program Funding: Partnered with an existing initiative headed by the Collier County Sheriff's Office.

How program got started:

Drug Free Collier was formed in 2005 when several existing local task force groups with similar goals merged into one coalition with a common mission - *to prevent and reduce juvenile substance abuse in Collier County through increased education, promotion of services and support in our community.* Spearheading the effort, a local juvenile judge, the Sheriff, and the District Medical Examiner brought together members of various sectors of the community, including business, school, mental health and healthcare professionals, to address the alarming increase of drug and alcohol use in our children. Looking at data provided by law enforcement, hospitals, the medical examiner and school surveys, alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs were identified as the top three concerns among youth in Collier County.

As a method to address the growing issue of prescription drug use, Drug Free Collier partnered with an already existing initiative within the Collier County Sheriff's Office - Operation Medicine Cabinet® (OMC). The program began in 1993 through the Sheriff's Office to encourage residents to clean-out their medicine cabinets of unused or expired medication.

Drug Free Collier further developed OMC with several objectives in mind:

- **To educate our communities by providing step-by-step instructions for medication storage and proper disposal;**
- **To protect our children from prescription drug abuse & our seniors from misuse and mistakes;**
- **To protect our environment, and**
- **To collect all medications, including controlled substances.**

Suggestions for broadening community support

1. **Develop strong collaborative partnerships with individuals and organizations that have a vested interest in the responsibility to protect children and the environment.**
2. **Think “outside the box.” For example, we formed a partnership with the local Medical Examiner's Office, which now serves as a permanent drop-off location. This facility already has procedures in place for pharmaceutical collection therefore the Office could easily modify their policy to accommodate OMC.**

Shortly after Drug Free Collier’s inception, the coalition was introduced to a long-time Collier County resident, Veora Little, with a passion to save and change lives. With prescription drug abuse on the rise and countless of teens and adults becoming addicts daily, Veora saw the impact prescription drugs took on her own loved ones and the need for a pharmaceutical take-back program. With this “champion” volunteer at the forefront of coordinating this effort, OMC has grown to be federally registered and recognized by many around the country as the model on how to run and educate a community on prescription take-back events.

Currently, Drug Free Collier holds two pharmaceutical take-back days yearly. The most recent, in November 2010, brought in just under 10,000 bottles of pills, which turned into approximately 450 pounds of pharmaceuticals that were safely disposed and taken out of the reach of our kids. Additionally, thanks to local partnerships, Collier County has five permanent OMC drop-off sites for residents to dispose of their medication on a routine basis. This is an important step in achieving environmental and behavioral change within the community.

Did you encounter any hurdles that others can learn from?

One of the biggest hurdles has been, and continues to be, convincing the community – parents, grandparents, business professionals – that substance abuse *is* an issue in our tropical community and that prescription drug abuse is being fed from within our own homes. Changing behavior and perceptions does not happen with ease. Drug Free Collier has seen success with OMC by marketing it as a program that is recognized within the community as a positive initiative. Presenting to local parent groups, school groups, civic associations and other community organizations has allowed the awareness message to spread and residents to understand the need for safe storage and appropriate disposal of medication.

Drug Free Collier’s Operation Medicine Cabinet

Category	Group
Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collier County Sheriff’s Office • Naples Police Department • Marco Island Police
Medical Examiner’s Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District 20 Medical Examiner’s Office
Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Everglades
Recycling Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naples Recycling Center
Retailers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVS Pharmacy • COSTCO • Sunshine Pharmacy • Wal-Mart • Sweetbay Supermarket
Walk-in Clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPN UrgentCare