

# AmerisourceBergen, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, Pfizer and Prime Therapeutics Join Walgreens to Combat Prescription Drug Abuse by Expanding Safe Medication Disposal Program

Wednesday, October 04, 2017 - 03:30am

Organizations across health care sector come together to expand safe medication disposal program to 1,500 Walgreens stores nationwide Goal set to collect 300 tons of unwanted medications over next two years

Leading health care organizations AmerisourceBergen, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, Pfizer and Prime Therapeutics are joining Walgreens to combat the national opioid abuse crisis by expanding the availability of safe medication disposal kiosks to an additional 900 Walgreens stores near military bases and other areas where the opioid epidemic has challenged communities. When the expansion is complete, kiosks will be available in approximately 1,500 Walgreens stores nationwide.

In the midst of the opioid epidemic, military members have emerged as a particularly vulnerable population. By expanding the focus to serve military communities, the organizations aim to help curb the misuse of medications that, according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, is higher among service members than civilians. Through the safe medication disposal kiosks, military communities will now have access to a safe way to dispose of their unwanted or unused prescription medications.

The announcement builds upon the initial 600 safe medication disposal kiosks Walgreens installed beginning in 2016 across 45 states and the District of Columbia. Those kiosks have collected 155 tons of unwanted medications in the first 18 months of the program. With this expansion, the organizations have set a goal to collect an additional 300 tons of unwanted medication in the next two years.

“We are proud to work with organizations from throughout the health care community to make it even easier for people to dispose of their unwanted medications,” said Alex Gourlay, president of Walgreens. “Since launching this program in 2016, we have been truly inspired by the response of the safe medication disposal program from communities around the country. The expansion of this program is a great example of health care organizations coming together in collaboration to address a real health crisis facing the country.”

"As a supply chain partner, we are committed to finding comprehensive solutions to mitigate the opioid epidemic impacting our communities, and we understand the important role we play in helping to combat medication diversion and abuse," said Bob Mauch, Executive Vice President & Group President, Pharmaceutical Distribution & Strategic Global Sourcing for AmerisourceBergen. "Innovation and collaboration between all parties involved in the delivery and regulation of health care will drive the greatest progress in impacting the

opioid crisis, and the diverse partnership supporting the expansion of Walgreens highly successful safe medication disposal program is a strong example of the type of collaboration that's needed."

"Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) is proud to support this critical and timely initiative so that more communities across the country will have access to safe medication disposal," said Kim Holland, vice president of state affairs for BCBSA. "Prescription medications that sit in home medicine cabinets pose a potential safety threat to family members and can be highly susceptible to diversion and misuse. With the escalating opioid crisis, it's more important than ever to invest in initiatives that focus on prevention and help keep loved ones and communities safe."

"Pfizer is committed to addressing the prevention, treatment, and effective response to the growing opioid abuse in our country. This partnership reaffirms our support for measures that promote the proper and safe disposal of unwanted medicines to deter prescription drug diversion and to protect the environment," said Pfizer's Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Freda Lewis-Hall.

A recent survey conducted by Prime revealed people taking opioids may not know how to safely dispose of unused medications. Only 17 percent had spoken with their doctor about safe disposal of unused medicine. Additionally, nearly a quarter of adults keep unused opioids instead of disposing of them, and only 27 percent of those who dispose of old medicine use a take back program to safely dispose of controlled substances. This data reveals there is a need to encourage safe disposal and that more take back locations is one way to promote safety.

"This crisis calls for an all-hands-on-deck approach," said Jonathan Gavras, senior vice president and chief medical officer, Prime Therapeutics. "Prime is proud to be sponsoring this take back kiosk initiative – as an extension of Prime's existing Controlled Substances Management Program – because we not only need to monitor for appropriate use, we need to make sure these dangerous medicines don't fall into the wrong hands. We encourage everyone to go through their medicine cabinets and drop their unwanted medicines safely into a nearby Walgreens kiosk."

Helping to achieve the goal to collect 300 additional tons of unwanted medication in two years is the #ItEndsWithUs campaign, recently launched by Walgreens to educate teens on the opioid epidemic. The campaign provides teens with online resources to end the opioid epidemic and positive steps they can take within their communities, including how to dispose of unwanted medications. The 900 additional kiosks will be installed over the next 10 months.

Safe medication disposal kiosks allow individuals to safely and conveniently dispose of their unwanted, unused or expired prescriptions, including controlled substances, and over-the-counter medications, at no cost. The kiosks at Walgreens pharmacies are available during regular pharmacy hours and offer one of the best ways to ensure medications are not accidentally used or intentionally misused by someone else.

## **About Walgreens**

Walgreens ([www.walgreens.com](http://www.walgreens.com)), one of the nation's largest drugstore chains, is included in the Retail Pharmacy USA Division of Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc. (NASDAQ: WBA), the first global pharmacy-led, health and wellbeing enterprise. More than 10 million customers interact with Walgreens each day in communities across America, using the most convenient, multichannel access to consumer goods and services and trusted, cost-effective pharmacy, health and wellness services and advice. Walgreens operates 8,175 drugstores with a presence in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, along with its omnichannel business, Walgreens.com. Approximately 400 Walgreens stores offer Healthcare Clinic or other provider retail clinic services.

## About AmerisourceBergen

AmerisourceBergen provides pharmaceutical products, value-driving services and business solutions that improve access to care. Tens of thousands of healthcare providers, veterinary practices and livestock producers trust us as their partner in the pharmaceutical supply chain. Global pharmaceutical manufacturers depend on us for services that drive commercial success for their products. Powered by our 20,000 associates, we are united in our responsibility to create healthier futures. AmerisourceBergen is ranked #11 on the Fortune 500, with more than \$146 billion in annual revenue. The company is headquartered in Valley Forge, Pa. and has a presence in 50+ countries. Learn more at [amerisourcebergen.com](http://amerisourcebergen.com).

## About Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association is a national federation of 36 independent, community-based and locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide health care coverage for one in three Americans. BCBSA provides health care insights through [The Health of America Report](#) series and the national [BCBS Health Index<sup>sm</sup>](#). For more information on BCBSA and its member companies, please visit [BCBS.com](http://BCBS.com). We also encourage you to connect with us on [Facebook](#), check out our videos on [YouTube](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and check out our [blog](#).

## About Pfizer Working together for a healthier world<sup>®</sup>

At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives. We strive to set the standard for quality, safety and value in the discovery, development and manufacture of health care products. Our global portfolio includes medicines and vaccines as well as many of the world's best-known consumer health care products. Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time. Consistent with our responsibility as one of the world's premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with health care providers, governments and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world. For more than 150 years, we have worked to make a difference for all who rely on us. We routinely post information that may be important to investors on our website at [www.pfizer.com](http://www.pfizer.com). In addition, to learn more, please visit us on [www.pfizer.com](http://www.pfizer.com) and follow us on Twitter at [@Pfizer](#) and [@Pfizer\\_News](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#) and like us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/Pfizer](https://www.facebook.com/Pfizer).

## About Prime Therapeutics

Prime Therapeutics LLC (Prime) helps people get the medicine they need to feel better and live well. Prime manages pharmacy benefits for health plans, employers, and government programs including Medicare and Medicaid. The company processes claims and delivers medicine to members, offering clinical services for people with complex medical conditions. Prime serves more than 20 million people. It is collectively owned by 18 Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans, subsidiaries or affiliates of those plans. For more information, visit [www.primetherapeutics.com](http://www.primetherapeutics.com) or follow [@Prime\\_PBM](#) on Twitter.

Walgreens Phil Caruso, 847-315-2962 [philip.caruso@walgreens.com](mailto:philip.caruso@walgreens.com)