

# University at Buffalo Police Department Installs the First Permanent Prescription Drug Drop Box in Western New York

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The University at Buffalo Police Department is the first police agency in Western New York and the first university in New York State to place a permanent “drop box” in their police department headquarters for citizens to safely dispose of expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs.

“The University at Buffalo has been participating in the national take-back days for several years,” said University at Buffalo Police Chief Gerald W. Schoenle. “However, we wanted to provide a safe and secure place where our community members could go at any time to dispose of these drugs and not wait months for a special day.”

UB’s round-the-clock collection site will be at the university Police Department HQ Building at Bissell Hall on the North Campus. UB Police expects to set up a second site on UB’s South Campus later this spring.

Rates of prescription drug abuse in the United States are increasing at alarming rates, especially for young adults who report they can easily obtain prescription pills from medicine cabinets in their own and other people’s homes.

The University Police starting looking into this type of program after Schoenle saw a demonstration at the International Chiefs of Police (IACP) Conference last year by the MedReturn Company, a company which sells the secure Drug Collection Units.

Although MedReturn has many units throughout the country, the UB Police site at Bissell Hall is the first one in New York State. An agency must comply with certain legal requirements before starting such a program. The effort was a collaborative effort between UB Police, the School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences, the Student Health Center, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning and the Erie County Department of Health.

Frank Scarpinato of the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning hopes that other police departments throughout Erie County will soon follow the lead set by UB.

Cheryll Moore, community coalition coordinator for the Erie County Department of Health, helped UB Police in obtaining the Sharps collection box provided by the Health Department.

Local Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) officials have scheduled another National Prescription Drug Take Back Day 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sat., April 28. Collection sites including those on the UB campus will be announced in March.

Americans participated in the DEA's third National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on Oct. 29, 2011, turned in more than 377,086 pounds (188.5 tons) of unwanted or expired medications for safe and proper disposal at the 5,327 take-back sites available in all 50 states and U.S. territories.

"The students and faculty from our school have been working on drug disposal programs with the DEA for several years," said Karl Fiebelkorn, associate dean at UB's School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

Inspector Daniel Jay, commander of the UB Police Criminal Investigation section, is coordinating this project for the University Police. UB Police Investigations will be responsible for the drug and needle destruction.

"Prescription drug abuse is a major problem on college campuses," said Jay. "This is a new way to dispose of your unused or unwanted medication in a legal safe manner. This new program will take drug disposal efforts to a new level."

Schoenle spoke with Gil Kerlikowske, U.S. director of National Drug Control Policy, about this program when he was at UB in October. Kerlikowske expressed his support of UB's proposed program, noting that proposed legislation will allow other sites to collect prescription drugs besides law enforcement agencies.

"We anticipate that several other police agencies will take up this very worthwhile initiative," Schoenle said. "Not only does this program help with the prescription drug abuse problem, this is also in keeping with UB's Green initiatives in keeping drugs out of our landfills and waterways."