



SAFE DISPOSAL OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS INCREASES DRAMATICALLY

Count It! Lock It! Drop It!™ Expansion Helps Raise Awareness in Fight Against Opioid Abuse

MANCHESTER, Tenn. (Oct. 18, 2017) – The amount of prescription drugs disposed of properly at drop boxes and take-back events across Tennessee increased to 43.8 tons – 75.4 percent more than the amount collected during the same period in the previous year – according to data collected by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI), the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC), and the prescription drug abuse prevention program Count It! Lock It! Drop It!™.

From September 2016 to August 2017, a record 87,654 pounds of prescription drugs were disposed of safely at take-back events and drop boxes located at various sites across the state, such as police stations. That is a dramatic increase from the 49,966 pounds, or 24.98 tons, that were collected from September 2015 through August 2016.

The increase comes as the CLD program expanded its fight against opioid abuse in Tennessee after receiving a \$1.3 million grant from the BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation in June 2016. The program, which was begun by the Coffee County Anti-Drug Coalition, now includes support training and outreach efforts in 63 counties that have signed up to participate. In addition, there is now at least one drug drop box in all 95 counties.

Meanwhile, public awareness of the CLD program has doubled in the past year, from 10 percent to 21 percent, according to the results of statewide surveys commissioned by CLD in 2016 and 2017.

“We are so grateful for the counties throughout Tennessee that are partnering to implement the CLD program,” said Kristina Clark, CLD project manager. “It is their hard work and leadership that has assisted in building a sustainable infrastructure in Tennessee to fight prescription drug abuse. With the help of organizations such as coalitions, health councils and law enforcement departments, we have distributed 144,000 campaign materials. This means increased access to lock boxes, counting brochures and information about drop boxes.”

“We are very encouraged about the increase in awareness of our program. The fact that about one of every five Tennessee adults say they have heard of us is especially encouraging given the fact that we have concentrated our efforts in just over half the counties in the state, which include those with the biggest opioid pain medication abuse problems,” she said.

Other findings of the 2017 survey, conducted in August to track results against a 2016 benchmark study, include:

- The number of people saying they are aware that medications should be safely discarded and not flushed down the toilet or thrown in the trash increased to 72 percent from 63 percent.
- Of those who said they had pain medication left over from their most recent prescription, 43 percent said they took it to a safe drop box or take-back event, up from 30 percent.

- Opioid pain medication abuse was named by 34 percent of respondents when asked what substance first comes to mind when they think of the substance abuse problem in Tennessee, well ahead of meth (14 percent) and alcohol (11 percent).

“Because of the efforts of TBI, TDEC, Tennessee Department of Health and the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and local coalitions and health councils, as well as many other organizations and increased media attention, we are making much progress in terms of raising awareness about just how serious the opioid abuse problem is in our state,” Clark said. “And that is helping us raise awareness about the importance of keeping pain medications in our homes out of the hands of family members and friends who might abuse them, and the proper way to dispose of unused medication.”

Roy Vaughn, chief communications officer of BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee and executive director of the BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation, echoed those sentiments.

“Opioid abuse and the resulting overdose deaths are a heartbreaking tragedy in our state,” Vaughn said. “BlueCross is proud to play a role in addressing this epidemic through our continued support of CLD as it expands the program to more counties across Tennessee. We hope that as we move forward awareness of the potential dangers of opioids grows and even more people will count, lock and drop off their medications.”

CLD suggests three simple steps that anyone can practice to keep their medications out of the wrong hands:

- Count pills every two weeks to monitor theft and help ensure medications are taken properly;
- Lock and store medications in a secure place where others would not think to look; and
- Drop off unused or expired medications at drop boxes or during take-back events.

For more information on joining Count It! Lock It! Drop It!TM or to locate a drop box or take-back event, visit www.countitlockitdropit.org.

About Count It! Lock It! Drop It!TM

Count It! Lock It! Drop It! (CLD) is a comprehensive community program for prescription drug abuse prevention that began in Coffee County, Tenn. Today, CLD is actively represented in 63 counties across Tennessee. For more information, visit countitlockitdropit.org.

About BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation, Inc.

The BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation, Inc., was established in December 2003 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation organized to promote the philanthropic mission of BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee. The foundation awards grants focused on high-impact initiatives across the state, which promote healthy lifestyle choices and help control health care costs for all Tennessee residents. Working with civic and economic partners, the foundation is dedicated to the support of research, innovative programs and creative approaches to improve the health and quality of life of Tennesseans for generations to come.

About BlueCross[®]

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