

# Funeral Directors: Help Your Clients Avoid Prescription Drug-Related Victimization



*Funeral directors have a unique opportunity to provide important information to their clients about the proper disposal of the recently deceased's prescription drugs.*



Loved ones who have passed may have been taking powerful pain relievers and other dangerous prescription drugs. Talking to your clients about the need for proper disposal of prescription drugs can prevent accidental poisonings and potential misuse. Another safety issue is that thieves may read obituaries in order to target the home of the deceased to steal leftover medications. Proper disposal prevents medications from falling into the wrong hands and keeps the environment safe from harmful toxins.

## What Can Funeral Directors Do?

Funeral directors can implement best practices to reduce the availability of prescription medications, prevent misuse and abuse of the medication, and provide safety and disposal recommendations to families.

### Best Practices:

- Add medication disposal to the checklist for pre- or post-funeral planning materials.
- Distribute medication safety tips.
- Discuss securing medications as soon as possible until the family is able to properly dispose of them.
- Dispose of unused medications by:
  - Taking them to a drug take-back box or drug take-back event. To find a nearby drug take-back box, visit <https://apps.ddap.pa.gov/gethelpnow/PillDrop.aspx>
  - Refraining from flushing medications down the toilet or throwing them in the trash, both of which harm the environment.

## Why Is It Important for Funeral Directors to Provide This Information?

- Loved ones who have passed may have left behind unused prescription medications in their homes. Unused or old medications pose the potential risk of:
  - **Poisoning.** Children or pets may ingest medicine and become sick or die.
  - **Medication theft.** Prescription pain relievers, in particular, can be illegally sold or given away.
  - **Unsafe nonmedical use by family members.** Over 50 percent of people who abuse prescription pain relievers get them from friends or relatives. (NSDUH 2015 Report)

Improperly disposing of medications directly in the trash can leave them accessible for nonmedical use. Improperly flushing some medications down the toilet can pollute water systems.



Not in  
**The Toilet**



Not in  
**The Trash**

Dispose in a  
**Drug Take-Back Box**

