



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.



Shortly before people die, they often take powerful pain relievers and other abusable drugs that can be dangerous. This information can prevent accidental poisonings and potentially dangerous self-medication by anyone who finds these drugs. Also, thieves may read obituaries in the newspaper or online 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 your communities safe from harmful toxins.

What Can Funeral Directors Do?

- Add medication disposal to the checklist for pre- or post-funeral planning materials. This can include the following:
 - » A list of the local medication drop-off locations, the list can be found at www.RethinkRxAbuse.org. Click on Arizona Rx Initiative.
 - » Guidelines from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's website.ⁱ
 - » Information from the "How to Handle Leftover Medication" fact-sheet.



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

- Recently deceased individuals may have unused prescription medications left 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 non-medical use by family members.** 2 out of 3 children in Arizona get medications they abuse from every day sources like friends, family and the medicine cabinet. ⁱⁱ In Arizona, 13 percent of adults report misusing prescription drugs in the past 30 days - almost half of the misuse involved prescription pain relievers. ⁱⁱⁱ
- Improperly disposing of medications directly in the trash can leave them accessible for non-medical use. Improperly flushing some medications down the toilet can pollute water systems.

Sources

- i. <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers?BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm>
- ii. Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, Arizona Youth Survey 2016
- iii. St. Luke's Initiative Survey, 2010