A permanent method of fulfilling a community’s need for prescription medicine disposal options is to install a permanent drop-box. There are several factors to consider prior to beginning this project, such as security, policy development, type of box, location, DEA authorization, promotion and cost.

**Security:** Security of your box may be the most important factor to consider, and working out this detail will probably dictate other factors such as location. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) will have to approve its location within your agency. Examples of security measures include affixing the box to a permanent structure like a floor or wall, maintaining camera surveillance on it or placing it by 24/7 staff like your dispatch services.

**Policy:** Developing internal policy is a must. This policy must clearly state the person(s) responsible for emptying the box, securing the contents, placing the contents into evidence and handling the disposal process. It is advantageous to work with your Forensic/Evidence Handling Staff to develop the policy. Specify in your policy who will maintain custody of the box keys(s).

**Type:** The type of box you select will need to meet any space constraints and be secure. Some agencies have contracted to have a box made to fit their specific location, some have boxes mounted inside walls to allow contents to be dropped into a secure area and many have ordered a commercial style mailbox used by the U.S. Postal Service. It is suggested that agency staff working in the area of the box visually inspect the area on a routine basis for loose pills.

**Location:** When selecting a location for your box, take into consideration accessibility for citizens. It may be easier for them to use if it is placed in an open area within your agency, not behind locked doors.

**DEA Authorization:** The most important part of implementing a permanent drop-off box program is receiving authorization from the DEA. You will need to formally request permission to take back medicines via this method by submitting a letter to the Regional Agent in Charge. Your letter must outline several key elements: location of the box, security measures that will protect the box and the process and policy in place to remove, secure, and the dispose of the discarded medicines.

At this time, federal regulations only allow authorized law enforcement agencies to collect, store and dispose of controlled substances. Therefore, permanent drop-off boxes can only be placed in law enforcement facilities.

**Promotion:** The key to making your drop-off box program successful is to advertise its existence. Utilize your media resources upon installation, place flyers in pharmacies and on community boards, and send out an e-mail to your project partners (substance abuse coalitions, judicial officials, environmental advocates, etc.) asking them to share the information. Check your box often until you get a feel for how often it is being used.

**Cost:** The average cost of a box is $800. Anticipate additional costs such as graphics, shipping, tax and installation. In many areas, community partners have contributed to the cost.

**Available Resources**

- [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/fed regs/](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/fed regs/) The DEA Code of Federal Regulations, Disposal of Controlled Substances, Section 1307.21 provides the procedure for disposing of controlled substances and the registration process. Section 1301.24, Exemption of law enforcement officials, describes the process for law enforcement officials.


- [www.ncdoi.com/OSFM/safekids/](http://www.ncdoi.com/OSFM/safekids/)