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Established in 1945, DuPage County Health Department promotes physical and emotional health; prevents illness injury and disability; protects health from environmental risk factors, and strives to assure the provision of accessible, quality service.

April 23, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DuPage County HOPE Taskforce Announces New Program to Reduce Access to Drugs

DUPAGE COUNTY—Today, as the fight against the opioid epidemic continues, the DuPage County Heroin/Opioid Prevention and Education (HOPE) Taskforce announced a new countywide effort to reduce access-to-drugs. Reducing access-to-drugs is one of the five strategies in the HOPE Taskforce’s Framework to lessen the impact of heroin/opioids on our community.

The plan unveiled today includes the “Deputy Pharmaceutical Pick-up Program”, introduced by DuPage County Sheriff James Mendrick, and increasing the number of drug take-back locations in CVS Health and Walgreens stores in the County. These initiatives improve the strong network of drug take-back locations in DuPage County that started 10 years ago with the DuPage County Health Department’s RxBOX, the first countywide drug take-back program in Illinois. Through the use of RxBOX, more than 100,000 pounds of medications have been collected and destroyed since, keeping the drugs from being misused or abused.

“RxBOX was introduced in 2009 as a way to keep medicines from landfills and waterways. Our law enforcement partners stepped up 10 years ago and have continued their invaluable support in keeping our residents and communities safer through this program. Today, the main focus of the program is to reduce access-to-drugs,” said Karen Ayala, Health Department Executive Director.

Dan Cronin, DuPage County Board Chairman said, “Our HOPE Taskforce is making significant strides in the fight to save lives, provide treatment and prevent the abuse of these dangerous drugs. Earlier today, along with the DuPage County Board, we proclaimed Saturday, April 27, 2019 “DuPage Prescription Drug Take Back Day” to coincide with the national drug take-back effort.”

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Chairman Cronin added, “We are certainly not the only county to grapple with the terrible issue of heroin and opioid addiction. But together, we will not rest until we see measurable results including reductions in the supply of, and demand for, these deadly drugs.”

Said Sheriff Mendrick, “I’m happy that we are strengthening our bond with our partners throughout the county. I’m dedicated to increasing the options available to our citizens to prevent unused opioids and other dangerous medications or narcotics being accessible to those who may abuse them.”

CVS Health and Walgreens have partnered with the HOPE Taskforce to reduce access-to-drugs by offering more drug take-back locations in DuPage County.

CVS Health is installing three more in-store safe medication disposal units in DuPage County, adding to the 36 units it has donated to law enforcement across Illinois and the 45 statewide CVS Pharmacy locations with in-store medication disposal units that help residents dispose of unused or expired prescription drugs all year long.

“Unused medications, especially opioids, pose a great risk of being misused or diverted when left in a medicine cabinet, which is why we are pleased to join DuPage County to increase access to, and awareness of, safe medication disposal options in the community,” said Pooja Patel, District Leader for CVS Pharmacy.

Walgreens has installed more than 75 safe medications disposal kiosks throughout Chicagoland including five in DuPage County, for anyone to dispose of unwanted medication at no-cost.

“Walgreens is pleased to support DuPage County’s efforts to combat the opioid epidemic. As the first pharmacy to offer safe medication disposal in a retail setting, we understand the need to provide convenient and year-round solutions to safely dispose of unwanted medications,” said Scott Diveney, Walgreens Regional Health Director in Chicagoland.

Greg Hart, DuPage County Board Member (Dist. 3) and HOPE Taskforce Co-chair said, “We will only make progress on combating the opioid epidemic through collaboration between the public and private sectors. Today, DuPage County, the HOPE Taskforce, Walgreens, and CVS are demonstrating our shared commitment to reducing the number of unused prescription opioids and making it easier for residents to dispose of them.”

“This is a true example of how public-private partnership can have an immediate and tangible impact. In support of the HOPE Taskforce, two pharmacies are increasing their local drug take-back initiatives,” Hart said.

If you or someone you know is struggling with a substance use disorder, the Illinois Helpline for Opioids and Other Substances at 833-2FINDHELP, and www.ilhelpline.org are available 24-hours a day, seven-days-a-week, 365-days-a-year and completely free.

The Heroin/Opioid Prevention and Education (HOPE) Taskforce is a joint operation of the DuPage County Board and the DuPage County Board of Health. The Taskforce consists of members from across many sectors in our community, specializing in mental health, law enforcement, adjudication, substance abuse treatment, prevention, and education.

For more resources and information, visit: www.hopedupage.org.

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