NVWMB supports efforts to establish permanent drop-off locations for prescription drugs.

Each year, more than $1 billion worth of drugs go unused. These unused prescription drugs are often left in medicine cabinets making them easily available to addicts, curious teens, innocent children, and pets. Drug take-back programs (e.g., collection receptacles, mail-back envelopes, and special events, etc.) provide residents with a convenient and safe way to dispose of expired or unwanted prescription drugs. Removing prescription drugs from the home reduces their availability to family members or others who might come across or be seeking them. Furthermore, drug take-back programs also provide an alternative to trash or drain disposal (flushing), which allows pharmaceutical compounds to enter the environment where they cause serious, documented damage to fish and other aquatic populations.

While pharmacies may establish drop-off programs for leftover medications, most do not. To address this, many states, counties, and cities have passed drug take-back laws that require pharmaceutical companies to finance and often manage programs to provide residents with a more convenient and safe medication drop-off options at pharmacies and other permissible locations. For example, Massachusetts, Vermont, and other communities around the U.S. have passed drug take-back laws that require industry responsible for financing and managing a safe disposal program for leftover medicines.

Since 2010, the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has organized twice-yearly National Drug Take-Back Days, during which communities can set up drug drop-off locations in conjunction with law enforcement to make up for a lack of collection options at other authorized sites like pharmacies.

Some localities in Virginia have opted to establish local drug “take-back” programs for disposing expired, unused, or unwanted medications. These municipalities typically partner with its Police Departments of Sherriff’s Offices for special take-back events while some operate permanent drug take-back locations. However these options are not available in all localities throughout Virginia.

In 2016, drug deactivation kits were made available in 2016 in Virginia to safely dispose leftover prescription pills for free. These disposal kits must be picked up at a local health department.

Virginia residents need permanent, convenient drop-off locations for leftover medications.