

# CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER INCREASES COMMUNITY ACCESS TO SAFE DRUG DISPOSAL WITH DETERRA



## CHALLENGE

### EXCESS PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS FUEL THE OPIOID CRISIS IN CONNECTICUT.

In 2019, Connecticut experienced a record number of drug overdose deaths, with nearly [1,200 deaths](#) attributed to drug misuse. In late 2020, experts reported a [22% increase](#) in overdose deaths in Connecticut.

To combat this growing problem, [Wheeler Clinic](#), a nonprofit community health center that provides healthcare and addiction treatment across the state, partnered with the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services ([DMHAS](#)) to raise awareness about prescription drug misuse and provide resources for the state during the pandemic.

“Removing unused medications from circulation via proper disposal is an important part of preventing misuse and environmental harm, and we found that distributing the [Deterra® Drug Deactivation and Disposal System](#) is a great way to educate people about disposal and provide them with an easy, at-home solution,” says Tom Fulton, Project Coordinator at Wheeler Clinic’s [Connecticut Clearinghouse](#).



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“A lot of the time we get caught up in just talking about how this is a problem, and it’s nice to have something that we can offer as a solution.” – Tom Fulton, Connecticut Clearinghouse Project Coordinator

## USE GRANT DOLLARS TO FUND OUTREACH AND INCREASE ACCESS TO SAFE DRUG DISPOSAL.

With access to in-person take back events and disposal sites limited during the pandemic, Wheeler Clinic needed to find creative ways to continue its prevention efforts. Through the [Connecticut Clearinghouse](#), a program of Wheeler Clinic that provides mental health and substance use prevention resources, the organization received funding through a [State Opioid Response \(SOR\) grant](#) for its [Change the Script](#) campaign, a statewide campaign that provides prevention, treatment and recovery resources.



The SOR grant from DMHAS funded medication storage boxes and Deterra Pouches that are distributed at events via the Change the Script Resource Van and are available to Connecticut residents for free at [drugfreeCT.org](#). Fulton says that Wheeler Clinic will continue to distribute Deterra Pouches post-pandemic because it has been such an impactful tool for the community.

“The resource van lets us go out and meet people where they are and provide resources like the Deterra Pouches,” says Fulton. “It’s a great opportunity to educate people that having unused and expired prescriptions is a problem, and then provide a solution to that problem with an at-home disposal method.”

Wheeler Clinic has distributed Deterra Pouches at events and COVID-19 pop-up testing sites alongside educational materials to raise awareness about the importance of safe, environmentally sound drug disposal.

“It was good to start a conversation because a lot of people didn’t realize that this was an issue; so many people would say, ‘I have this bag of prescriptions and I had no idea what to do with it,’ and we were able to say, ‘great, use this to dispose of it,’” says Fulton. “When one of the DEA take back event sites that we went to was full, Deterra was the only means for people to dispose of their medications. It was nice that we had the pouches because otherwise those people would have had no option for disposal.”

Fulton adds that Deterra’s ease of use and distribution as well as its plant-based packaging and ability to keep unused medications from leaching into landfills and water systems made it a perfect fit for the clinic’s outreach effort.

## RESULT

### OVER 3,000 DETERRA POUCHES DISTRIBUTED TO ELIMINATE THOUSANDS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISUSE.

Wheeler Clinic has distributed more than 3,000 Deterra Pouches in multiple sizes at events, on the Change the Script website and through dispersal at five regional behavioral health action organizations. The clinic received a 2-year grant award for 2018-2020 and another round of funding to continue its efforts for 2020-2022 from the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

As part of the reapplication process, Wheeler Clinic vetted prevention and harm reduction strategies to determine their feasibility and cost-effectiveness; survey data and campaign impressions were also used to evaluate the impact of the Change the Script campaign.

“A lot of time we get caught up in just talking about how this is a problem, and it’s nice to have something that we can offer as a solution,” says Fulton. “It’s been great to have that interaction with someone where you can educate them that first of all, they should be disposing of medications, and second, that there’s an environmental implication to that and how this product works.”

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