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**Free Medicine Disposal Kits and Lock Boxes Available at Local Health Department**

SHELBY, NC – As drug overdose deaths and emergency department visits continue to rise in Cleveland County, the Cleveland County Health Department is providing free resources to help prevent medication misuse and abuse. According to NCDHHS, Cleveland County experienced 36 overdose deaths in 2022 and 241 overdose ED visits in 2023. Almost 40% of all overdose ED visits in Cleveland County in 2022 were due to commonly prescribed opioids.

The data shows a clear picture – prescription opioid misuse prevention tools are more important than ever. The Cleveland County Health Department (CCHD) is proud to offer a variety of ways to prevent the misuse of prescription medications.

CCHD has Deterra pouches and medicine lock boxes available free of charge to help local households prevent medication misuse, accidental ingestion, and environmental harm through safe storage and safe disposal of unused or expired medications.

Dependence on prescription opioids can unintentionally start in home medicine cabinets, where unused and expired medication can be easily accessed by family members and friends. Harm reductions methods, like Deterra and medicine lock boxes exist to help our community prevent substance misuse before it starts.

Deterra medication disposal kits are highly effective in rendering drugs inactive and unavailable for misuse and are safe for the environment. In a 3-step process, a user deactivates drugs by putting them in a Deterra Pouch, adding water, shaking, and throwing away in the household garbage. Deterra's plant-based packaging and non-toxic ingredients also prevent harmful chemicals from entering our landfills and water supplies, making the world safer for everyone.

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Medicine lockboxes are also available free of charge as part of the Lock Your Meds national campaign to reduce prescription drug misuse through safe home storage.

Community members who would like a free Deterra medication disposal kit or medicine lock box can pick them up at the front desk of the Cleveland County Health Department located at 200 S. Post Road, Shelby, NC, between 8 AM and 5 PM, Monday – Friday. For more information or to request Deterra or medicine lock boxes for your home or business, you can also contact Carmen Barbuto, Drug Free Communities Grant Coordinator, at [carmen.barbuto@clevelandcountync.gov](mailto:carmen.barbuto@clevelandcountync.gov) or 980-484-5335.

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