

# Reminder Card Materials for “Enhancing the Effect of Cash Buyback on Return of Unused Opioid Pills”



The White River Junction Veterans Affairs Medical Center implemented a cash buyback program, called Cash for Your Stash, in which outpatient surgery patients who return unused prescription opioid pills to the VA pharmacy can receive \$5 per returned pill, up to \$50. The Office of Evaluation Sciences worked with the VA medical center to design and test two reminder cards to enhance the effects of the cash incentive. The first card is given to the patient when they receive their prescription opioid pills, and another is mailed to the patient approximately one week later.

Patients were randomly assigned to control and treatment conditions. Patients in the control condition received the standard information about the program only, which included a printed page about the cash buyback option and a sticker on the pill bottle, shared with patients at the time of surgery. Patients in the intervention condition received the reminder cards in addition to the standard information about the buyback program.

The cards increased the likelihood that a patient would return unused opioid pills by 7.0 percentage points and also increased the average number of pills returned by 1.08 on a baseline of 2.08 pills.

The materials below provide the content of two reminder cards and describe the best practices adopted in these designs for effective communications.

The cards were designed with four principles in mind: **make it timely**, **keep it simple**, **make it easy**, and **loss aversion**. The way these principles were applied to the cards is described below:

<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Make it timely</b></p> <p>Highlight the importance of taking action soon.</p> <p>Distribute the cards at times most likely to serve as a reminder.</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Keep it simple</b></p> <p>Include essential information about the program to raise awareness.</p> <p>Provide simple step-by-step instructions to return pills.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Make it easy</b></p> <p>Provide simple tools to help people remember to return their pills.</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>Loss aversion</b></p> <p>Frame the decision to be one where <i>not</i> taking action means incurring losses (as opposed to one where taking action results in gains)</p>
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For more information on this intervention or to start a conversation, please contact [oes@gsa.gov](mailto:oes@gsa.gov).



## Important: If you have unused opioid pills, bring them back to the VA pharmacy for cash!

**YOU HAVE  
UP TO \$50  
WAITING  
FOR YOU**



**All you need to  
do is return  
your unused  
opioid pills**

You are receiving opioid pills to help manage any pain you might have in the next few days. **Opioid pills have a risk of addiction and misuse, so it's important to properly dispose of them!**



Read the pink letter with instructions in this packet.



Put a reminder on your calendar for one week from now — that will be a good time to take stock of unused opioid pills.



As another reminder to think about this one week from now, fill in the date below — then save this card on your fridge, or in another place where you'll see it every day.

**One week from now is \_\_\_\_\_**



Keep opioid pills in the original prescription bottle.

Frame the decision as one where not returning pills means missing out on up to \$50.

Highlight key information about the program to raise awareness.

Provide simple step-by-step instructions for returning pills.

Provide simple tools to help people remember to return the pills.

Distribute durable cards on the day of surgery to ensure awareness of the program even when under the influence of anesthesia.

Provide a clear time frame to encourage taking action soon.



## Reminder: Time to return unused opioid pills for cash!

After your recent surgery, you received opioid pills to help manage any pain. You have **60 days from your surgery** to return opioid pills for cash!

**YOU HAVE UP TO \$50 WAITING FOR YOU**



**All you need to do is return your unused opioid pills**

I have \_\_\_\_\_ pills to return

**Count any unused opioid pills you might have.**



**Keep opioid pills in the original prescription bottle.**



**Open:**  
Mon – Fri  
9AM – 3:30PM

**Make a plan for returning them to the outpatient pharmacy window at your VAMC.** Many patients return unused opioid pills when they have a follow-up appointment at the VA – or you can come anytime the pharmacy is open!

For more information, see the pink letter you received on the day of your surgery, or call 802-291-6255.

Frame the decision as one where not returning pills means missing out on up to \$50.

Provide simple step-by-step instructions for returning pills, with key text bolded.

Highlight the importance of taking action soon.

Provide simple tools to help people remember to return the pills.

The costing information below outlines the costs the White River Junction Veterans Affairs Medical Center faced when implementing both the Cash For Your Stash program as well as the OES-designed reminder cards over the duration of this experiment.

### Cash For Your Stash Program

**Personnel:** \$2,867 for pharmacy technician salary time spent on the program

**Receptacle starter pack:** \$2,999 for one bin, 3 liners

**Replacement liners:** \$743 per 4-pack

**Security camera:** \$3,300 - \$14,500 (lower bound is for clinics adding to existing cameras, upper bound is for clinics with no existing cameras)

**Incentives:** \$5 per pill, up to 10 pills (\$50) per person

**Printing:** \$0.15 per page and 5 pages per patient

**Pink paper for distributing program information:** \$14 for 500 sheets

**Stickers for pill bottles:** \$20 for 100 sheets (50 stickers per sheet)

### Reminder Cards Add-on

**Envelopes:** \$30 per 200

**Mailing:** \$1 per mailing

**Printing:** \$130.52 for 100 cards

Cost effectiveness analysis indicated that the **reminder cards reduced the cost per pill returned.**

- When using reminder cards, the cost per pill returned was \$12.57.
- When no reminder cards were used, the cost per pill returned was \$15.66.