



Coalition for Safe
Community Needle Disposal

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National Problem

On July 31, 2007, Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and Congressman Mike Ferguson (R-NJ) introduced companion legislation in the Senate (S. 1909) and House (H.R. 3251) that will provide coverage, as supplies associated with the injection of insulin, of home needle removal, decontamination and disposal devices and the disposal of needles and syringes through a sharps-by-mail or similar program under Part D of the Medicare Program. The effective date for this bill is January 1, 2008.

Current estimates show that approximately nine million people are injecting medication at home generating up to 3 billion needles each year in the U.S. Two thirds of those people are injecting for medicinal purposes ranging from diabetes to arthritis to hepatitis. The most common method of disposal has been to discard used needles in household trash posing a critical patient and public health concern.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) introduced new recommendations on disposal of used syringes generated by self-injectors outside traditional health care facilities in the U.S. in 2004. New EPA recommendations suggest participating in one of two programs: a community program (such, as community drop-off centers, household hazardous waste facilities, residential "special waste" pick-up services or syringe exchange programs) or a national disposal program (such as, sharps mailback programs, or at-home needle destruction devices).

What This Bill Does

By including coverage of needle disposal under Part D of the new Medicare program, a large percentage of home needle users will be offered safer solutions at an affordable price.

How You Can Help

If you are interested in more information or co-sponsoring this bill, contact Tyler Thompson in Senator Isakson's office at 202-224-3643, Derick Apt in Representative Ferguson's office at 202-225-5361, or call the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal at 800-643-1643 or www.safeneedledisposal.org