STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Expired Medication Disposal SOP

Document no.	SOP-PHA-005
Revision	1.0
Owner	Pharmacist in Charge
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To remove expired and unusable medication from active stock promptly and dispose of it through an authorized channel with documentation that supports an audit.

2. Scope

Applies to expired, damaged, recalled or otherwise unusable prescription and over-the-counter stock. Controlled substance destruction follows additional documentation covered in the controlled substances handling SOP.

Definitions

Reverse distributor	A licensed company that processes returns and destruction of unusable pharmaceutical stock on the pharmacy's behalf.
Short-dated stock	Medication approaching its expiration date within a window set by pharmacy policy, flagged for use or return before it expires.
Certificate of destruction	Documentation from the reverse distributor or disposal facility confirming an item was destroyed.

3. Responsibilities

Pharmacy Technician	Runs expiration reports, pulls and segregates expired stock, and prepares it for pickup.
Pharmacist	Reviews segregated items, approves disposal method and signs off on documentation.
Pharmacist in Charge	Oversees controlled substance destruction and retains records per the retention schedule.
Reverse Distributor	Collects returnable stock, provides manifests and issues certificates of destruction.

RACI matrix

Activity	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist	Pharmacist in Charge	Reverse Distributor
Run expiration report and pull stock	R/A	I	-	-
Segregate and document expired stock	R/A	C	I	-
Approve disposal method	I	R/A	I	-

Activity	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacist	Pharmacist in Charge	Reverse Distributor
Witness controlled substance destruction	I	R	A	C
Provide manifest and certificate of destruction	I	I	A	R

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Expiration report from the pharmacy system
- Quarantine bin for non-controlled expired stock
- Locked container for expired controlled substances
- Disposal or return log
- Reverse distributor manifest forms

Personal protective equipment

- Disposable nitrile gloves

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Run the monthly expiration report** Generate a report from the pharmacy system listing items expiring in the coming months, sorted by expiration date.	Pharmacy Technician	☐
5.2	**Physically check the shelves** Walk the shelves against the report and pull any item nearing or past its expiration date, checking that the report matches what is physically present.	Pharmacy Technician	☐
5.3	**Segregate into quarantine** Move non-controlled expired or short-dated stock into the designated quarantine bin, clearly separated from active dispensing stock. **Warning:** Never leave expired stock mixed in with active shelf stock where it could be dispensed by mistake.	Pharmacy Technician	☐
5.4	**Separate controlled substances** Place expired controlled substances into the locked container designated for destruction, kept apart from non-controlled items.	Pharmacy Technician	☐
5.5	**Sort returnable versus non-returnable items** Check each item against the reverse distributor's return policy to sort stock eligible for credit from stock that must go straight to destruction.	Pharmacy Technician	☐
5.6	**Document each item** Record the drug name, strength, quantity, lot number and expiration date for every item on the disposal or return log before packaging. **Checkpoint:** Every item leaving the pharmacy for disposal is logged with quantity and lot number before pickup.	Pharmacy Technician	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.7	**Package for pickup** Package items per the reverse distributor's instructions, using separate containers for hazardous, non-hazardous and controlled items as required.	Pharmacy Technician	☐
5.8	**Approve the disposal method** Review the packaged items and confirm the disposal or return method is appropriate before the reverse distributor is scheduled for pickup.	Pharmacist	☐
5.9	**Witness controlled substance destruction** Have the pharmacist in charge or designated witness confirm the count and sign the destruction paperwork for controlled substances before they leave the pharmacy.	Pharmacist in Charge	☐
5.10	**Obtain the manifest and certificate** Collect a signed manifest at pickup and request the certificate of destruction once processing is complete.	Pharmacy Technician	☐
5.11	**Update the inventory system** Remove disposed items from the active inventory system so on-hand counts reflect the stock actually available for dispensing.	Pharmacy Technician	☐
5.12	**File records per the retention schedule** File the disposal log, manifest and certificate of destruction together and retain them per the pharmacy's records retention schedule.	Pharmacist in Charge	☐

6. Quality checks

- No expired item remains mixed in with active dispensing stock.
- Every disposed item is logged with quantity and lot number.
- Controlled substance destruction is witnessed and documented.
- Certificates of destruction are filed for every completed pickup.

7. Records

- Disposal or return log
- Reverse distributor manifests
- Certificates of destruction
- Controlled substance destruction witness records

8. KPIs

- Dollar value of expired stock disposed per quarter
- Percentage of short-dated stock caught before it expires
- Average time from flagging to pickup
- Number of expired items found during dispensing (should be zero)

9. Common mistakes

- Letting short-dated stock sit unflagged until it actually expires.
- Mixing controlled and non-controlled items in the same disposal container.
- Not logging lot numbers, making later audits difficult.
- Losing the certificate of destruction after pickup.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Ilia Pirozhenko

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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