

Combatting the Demise of Older Adults at The Hands of Opioid Abuse & Misuse

By Michelle Thomas, County of Arlington

[Arlington's Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program](#) (VICAP) provides free, unbiased, confidential health insurance counseling for Medicare beneficiaries. Annually (between October 15th and December 7th), the Open Enrollment Period is a time when beneficiaries can change their Medicare Advantage and Prescription drug plans (Part D).

During the 2019 Open Enrollment Period, VICAP invited beneficiaries to bring their list of medications and partnered with the Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative (AARI) to offer information about safely discarding unused or unneeded opioids and other medications. AARI is a community wide stakeholders' group that leverages data collection, community outreach, and prevention to combat the opioid crisis. VICAP invited AARI to present at monthly Medicare classes and provide education to the community about the importance of properly disposing unused medications. AARI supplied VICAP with resources about safely disposing unused and expired medications through permanent drug takeback boxes and Detera drug deactivation kits.

As a result of the success of this partnership, the submitted proposal to the [VA Governors Conference on Aging](#) was accepted. This May my colleague and I will spearhead a presentation at the conference and discuss how VICAP is making positive contributions towards increasing awareness and providing solutions to decrease the opioid crisis. Through VICAP's outreach, 150 Detera drug deactivation kits were distributed to Medicare beneficiaries who chose to safely dispose of unused, unwanted, and expired medication.

While the initial launch of Detera drug deactivation kits occurred during the 2019 Medicare Open Enrollment period, the collaboration and partnership continues with colleagues within the Arlington County Police Department, Arlington County Fire Department, and the Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative.

Join me in Richmond on May 12, 2020 at the [VA Governors Conference on Aging](#) to hear how Arlington County is actively working with stakeholders to save lives. We'd love to see you there!