

Preventing Drug Diversion

Defending Health and Safety in Maryland

Drug diversion fuels the opioid crisis, claiming thousands of lives annually and harming families and communities. By illegally diverting prescription drugs, offenders put patients and the public at risk. The Maryland Office of the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud & Vulnerable Victims Unit (MFVVU) investigates and prosecutes drug diversion cases to protect Marylanders from unscrupulous providers.

What Is Drug Diversion?

- Drug diversion occurs when someone illegally takes medication meant for a patient. This can occur in places like nursing homes, residential group homes, hospitals and assisted living facilities.
- The most commonly diverted drugs are opioid pain relievers and sometimes tranquilizers or sedatives. Examples are codeine, Darvon, Demerol, Dilaudid, fentanyl, morphine, oxycodone and Vicodin.

Why Drug Diversion Is Harmful

Drug diversion impacts everyone:

- **Patients** suffer because they don't get the pain relief they need.
- **Trust is broken** between patients, families and caregivers.
- **Health care costs rise** due to increased insurance premiums and losses to public and private health insurers, costing over \$72 billion each year.*

*Source: U.S. Department of Justice National Drug Intelligence Center

Who Diverts Drugs?

- Drug diversion can happen at many points in the medical and long-term care systems:
 - **Health care workers:** Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, nursing assistants, direct care workers and others may divert drugs for personal use or illegal sale.



Common Methods of Drug Diversion

- Theft of prescription drugs from patients or storage areas
- Switching prescribed drugs with similar-looking, less effective ones
- Falsifying records to hide drug use or theft
- Using a resident's ID or code to manipulate dispensing machines



Access our online reporting form by scanning the QR code below.

Report Drug Diversion:



- **Others involved in distribution:** Manufacturers, wholesale distributors and even patients may divert prescription drugs.

Note: If you suspect drug diversion by someone other than a facility staff member (e.g., a family member or friend), contact your local police.

Warning Signs

Family members and facility staff should be alert for these signs of drug diversion:

- **Increased pain** or complaints of not receiving medication.
- **Unusual behavior** from the caregiver or staff member.
- **Broken or taped drug packaging** (e.g., blister packs).
- **Medication codes that don't match** what's recorded on the pack or bottle.

What You Can Do

If you suspect drug diversion, notify the facility's director and contact the MFVVU to report what you know. Use the [online reporting form](#) or contact us via the methods below to give details.

Contact Us

Maryland Office of the Attorney General
Medicaid Fraud & Vulnerable Victims Unit

- Address: 200 St. Paul Place, 18th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202
- Phone: 410-576-6521 or toll-free at 1-888-743-0023
- Email: medicaidfraud@oag.state.md.us
- Online: oag.maryland.gov/i-need-to/Pages/medicaid-fraud-vulnerable-victims.aspx