



## **Missouri picks vendor for online system to track pseudoephedrine sales**

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SPRINGFIELD, Mo. -- Gov. Jay Nixon said Monday that Appriss of Louisville, Ky., was selected to build Missouri's first database that tracks purchases of pseudoephedrine products. The database will let pharmacists and law enforcement officers determine at the point of sale whether a buyer has gone from store to store buying large amounts of pseudoephedrine as a way to get around legal limits.

The system will automatically deny a sale to a buyer who has exceeded the daily maximum purchase of 3.6 grams, or 120 standard tablets. Nixon said the system will let people buy the medicine if they legitimately need it but block sales to people trying to build an inventory to make methamphetamine.

"This is the answer, a really good move," said pharmacist Gary Grove.

Pharmacists like Grove have been waiting for an electronic pseudoephedrine database for a long time.

"We needed it 20 years ago," said Grove.

"Meth consumption continues to be a problem that devastates families and even whole communities in Missouri," Nixon said. "This database will be another important step toward cutting off meth makers at the source."

A selection committee representing health officials, pharmacy representatives, police and prosecutors chose Appriss from among six companies that submitted bids to create and operate the system. Appriss already operates similar systems linking some 18,000 pharmacies in states surrounding Missouri.

"If a person has already purchased 9 grams of Sudafed or pseudoephedrine, it'll stop the sale at another pharmacy," said Grove.

"It'll track suspicious patterns, even find fake IDs," said Missouri Highway Patrol Sgt. Dan Bracker. Senate Bill 724, passed by the General Assembly and signed into law in 2008, required the creation of an electronic system in which pseudoephedrine purchases could be tracked. The system likely will be up and running within three months. Pharmaceutical companies agreed to pick up the cost of developing the database and ongoing costs.

Under current law, pseudoephedrine products can be sold only at a pharmacy and must be kept behind a counter. Buyers must show identification and sign a register. Law enforcement must review dozens of registers to find the names of people making multiple purchases.

With the online database, pharmacists will enter the buyer's name into the database and get an immediate record of how much pseudoephedrine the person has purchased, and where and when the purchases were made. If the new purchase would put the buyer over the daily or monthly limit, the purchase will be denied.

"Instead of going through thousands of records by hand, there's the computer," said Bracker. A buyer who is denied would receive a receipt with Appriss' phone number asking the person to call Appriss for an explanation of the denial. The rejected buyer's name, address and phone number will be sent to police. The system is also able to flag multiple purchasers living at the same address and track other suspicious patterns.

This may curb the creation of meth but it won't alleviate it entirely.

"They'll find ways around it, bring in more people, but this is a good day for Missouri," said Bracker.

For people who buy pseudoephedrine for sinus problems, their health information will not be shared. Federal law tries to make sure of that.

"It's all HIPPA-protected," said Grove.

"It will not be an infringement of their rights," said Bracker.

Under the contract, Appriss also will provide free training to pharmacy staffs on how to use the system. The company also will provide free training to law enforcement personnel on how to spot suspicious purchases.

Several lawmakers this year have proposed requiring a prescription to buy medications containing pseudoephedrine.

Missouri had the most meth lab incidents in the nation last year. It's held that distinction for several years.

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