



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.  
**4-2**

For the meeting of: June 7, 2016

Date: May 16, 2016  
To: Board of Supervisors  
From: Connie Beck, Director *C. Beckley*  
Department of Health and Human Services – Public Health (DHHS-PH)  
Subject: Report on DHHS-PH Syringe Services Program / Needle Exchange

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors receive and file a report on the syringe services program by Humboldt County Health Officer, Dr. Donald Baird and program staff and take action as appropriate.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Public Health Fund

DISCUSSION:

Syringe services programs, also known as needle exchange or syringe exchange, prevent the spread of HIV, viral hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases among people who inject drugs, their partners and their children. In 2000, the Humboldt Board of Supervisors approved syringe exchange services by partner agencies. In 2012 the Board approved DHHS-Public Health's Syringe Services Program through mobile outreach. Current regulations require that the Health Officer update the Board on the status of needle exchange programs in the county. Humboldt County Health Officer, Dr. Baird and program staff will give a brief oral report. The full, written report is attached.

Prepared by Karen Baker *KB*

CAO Approval *Erithia HGS*

REVIEW: Auditor \_\_\_\_\_ County Counsel \_\_\_\_\_ Human Resources \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF ITEM:  
 Consent  
 Departmental  
 Public Hearing  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No. C-9

Meeting of: 5/22/12

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

Upon motion of Supervisor *Bass* Seconded by Supervisor *Fennell*

Ayes *Sundberg, Fennell, Lovelace, Bohn, Bass*  
Nays \_\_\_\_\_  
Abstain \_\_\_\_\_  
Absent \_\_\_\_\_

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

Dated: *June 7, 2016*  
By: *Kathy Hayes*  
Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact related to the report on syringe services. This report reflects support of your Board's Strategic Framework by protecting vulnerable populations and creating opportunities for improved safety and health.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment #1      Report on DHHS – PH Syringe Services Program

# Attachment #1



## **DEPARTMENTAL REPORT TO HUMBOLDT COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

SUBJECT: DHHS- Public Health Syringe Services Program (Needle Exchange)

June 7, 2016

Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

825 5<sup>th</sup> St.

Eureka, CA 95501

### **OVERVIEW**

Syringe services programs, which have also been referred to as needle exchange programs and syringe exchange programs, provide access to sterile needles and syringes free of cost and facilitate safe disposal of used needles and syringes. These programs prevent the spread of HIV, viral hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases such as bacterial infections like MRSA (methicillin resistant staphylococcus) among people who inject drugs, their partners and their children. In 2000, the Humboldt Board of Supervisors approved syringe exchange services by partner agencies. In 2012 the Board approved DHHS- Public Health's Syringe Services Program through mobile outreach. This report satisfies state regulatory requirements to maintain Public Health's syringe services in Humboldt County.

### **PROGRAM BENEFITS**

The availability of syringe services programs is a part of a comprehensive continuum of services for people who inject drugs and continues to be best practice (Bluthenthal, et. Al, 2009) as a public health measure to reduce transmission of blood borne pathogens. Multiple studies show that syringe service programs do not lead to increased drug use. Rather, syringe services programs:

- Increase access to necessary drug treatment and provide important referrals for health care, insurance, and housing
- Decrease incidence of HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, and bacterial infections
- Provide proper disposal and reduce syringe litter
- Provide free HIV and hepatitis C testing
- Provide opportunities for overdose prevention education and services.

Communities that do not have syringe services program have higher rates of HIV and hepatitis C among people who inject drugs. In rural Austin, Indiana, population 4,200, nearly 200 people were infected with HIV and 90% of them infected with hepatitis C in 2015 due to sharing injection equipment. Such scenarios support the need for syringe services programs in rural areas where there is a large population of people who inject drugs. Syringe services programs have been shown to be effective in reducing the transmission of HIV and other communicable disease among people who inject drugs.

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) reports that of the 117,553 people living with HIV/AIDS in California in 2012, 15% identified their risk for HIV as injection drug use. Further, the CDPH Office of Viral Hepatitis estimates that at least 60% of hepatitis C infections in the state are associated with injection drug use. Lack of access to new, sterile injection equipment is a primary reason for sharing of equipment.

Humboldt County has the highest incidence of new diagnoses of chronic hepatitis C in the state, and the average age at diagnosis is younger than the statewide average, suggesting current transmission of hepatitis C in the county. Humboldt County has a high reported prevalence of hepatitis C at 5.0%, much higher than the estimated national prevalence of 1.9%, and state prevalence of 0.09%. There are currently 7,193 people diagnosed with chronic hepatitis C in the county. In scenarios where hepatitis C is

transmitted there can be a high risk of HIV transmission.

Diseases can be transmitted by all injection equipment including syringes, cottons, cookers, water, tourniquets, and alcohol swabs. The syringe services program provides safe injection kits because these are essential for the prevention of disease transmission. Hepatitis C in particular is highly infectious outside the body for weeks.

## **CURRENT SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAM**

### **Description of Services**

- Sterile syringes in exchange for used ones (1:1 exchange)
- Safe injection equipment
- Safer sex supplies/condoms
- HIV and hepatitis C risk reduction education, testing and counseling
- Sharps disposal containers and information on proper disposal
- Referrals for medical care, alcohol and other drug treatment, medical insurance, housing assistance, and, food assistance
- Overdose prevention education and Narcan, (naloxone) distribution
- Personal hygiene supplies
- Pharmacy education about non-prescription syringe and Narcan sales (under state law pharmacies can sell an unlimited number of syringes to an individual and Narcan over the counter).

### **Summary of Activities 2014 – 2016**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016 (1/16 – 4/16)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Syringes Exchanged	30,872	86,654	40,238	157,764
Client Visits	623	1,967	693	3,283
Narcan Kits	28	43	37	108
OD reversals (As reported to staff)	6	34	12	52

### **Exchange Hours & Locations**

Services are provided Monday – Friday at set times in various locations throughout the county via a mobile outreach van retrofitted to provide a safe, confidential space for client services, including HIV and hepatitis C testing. Three other programs independently offer syringe services programs in the county.

### **HIV Prevention**

The Humboldt HIV prevention programs are aligned with both the State HIV Prevention strategy and the National HIV/AIDS strategy. Our plan targets the highest risk populations including homeless, injection drug users, men who have sex with men, and transgender individuals for prevention services. Syringe Services remains an integral component of the plan. Other prevention strategies used to reduce the transmission of HIV include:



- HIV rapid testing services in the community reached more than 83 people in the last year, with one positive HIV test and four positive hepatitis C tests.
- The availability of Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent transmission of HIV.
- Case management to connect newly positive people to necessary medical care and follow up to support appropriate medical treatment. 100% of people that have a positive rapid test result in Humboldt are linked to HIV care within 5 days.

### **Overdose prevention**

Naloxone (also known as Narcan®) is a medication called an “opioid antagonist” used to counter the effects of opioid overdose, for example morphine and heroin overdose. The syringe services program has distributed 37 Narcan kits to individual program clients so far in 2016. In addition, we have worked with community partners to make sure that other people at risk for opioid overdose have access to this life-saving medication. One hundred ninety seven kits have been distributed through community partners such as Healthy Moms and the Open Door Community Health Centers. Partners and program clients receive training on how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose before receiving a kit.

### **Disposal**

Syringe services provided in Humboldt County are conducted using a one for one exchange model. Participants are responsible for placing used syringes directly into an approved sharps disposal container. Sealed sharps containers are disposed of through a contracted biohazard waste management agency through the Public Health Clinic. The program provides brochures with information about safe sharps disposal and locations.

### **PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION**

Since 2006, Public Health has hosted quarterly meetings of Humboldt County Syringe Exchange Partners. The meetings are attended by Public Health staff and representatives from syringe service and harm reduction programs from throughout the county. The purpose of the meeting is to review syringe service program data, share legislative updates, explore funding opportunities, share community and client feedback, and provide education about best practices for harm reduction programs.

### **SOURCE OF FUNDING**

Over the years, Humboldt’s syringe services programs have relied on private grants and donations, and Public Health Realignment funding. In December, 2015, Congress lifted a decades old ban on using federal funds to support syringe exchange. Current funding sources include: California Department of Public Health – Office of AIDS, Partnership Health Plan of California and other small grants, including a donation of Evzio (Narcan) kits from Kaleo Pharmaceutical Company.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Syringe services programs are recommended as public health best practice supported by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), California Department of Public Health, and World Health Organization. The DHHS, PH Syringe Services Program is an essential component of Humboldt County’s strategy for reducing the harms of drug use on individuals, families, and communities. Benefits include the prevention of disease, injury, and death associated with drug use, as well as strengthened collaborations for addressing other drug related harm including referral to treatment.

## REFERENCES:

Bluthenthal, R. et al. (2009). Recommended best practices for effective syringe exchange programs in the United States: Results of a consensus meeting. Report. Accessed May 10, 2016 at: [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/Documents/US\\_SEP\\_recs\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/Documents/US_SEP_recs_final_report.pdf)

Cal. Health & Safety Code §121349.3.

Conrad, C. et al. (2015). Community outbreak of HIV infection linked to injection drug use of oxymorphone-Indiana, 2015. CDC MMWR: May 1, 2015 / 64(16);443-444. Accessed May 20, 2016 at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6416a4.htm>

Saliby, S. (2016). Scott Co. Public Health Emergency, Needle Exchange Extended. May 2, 2016. Indiana Public Media. Accessed, May 10, 2016 at: <http://indianapublicmedia.org/news/public-health-emergency-scott-county-extended-98224/>

The White House. (2010). National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States. July 13, 2010. The White House Office of National AIDS Policy. Accessed, May 10, 2016 at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/onap/nhas>