



## ***Why Should Louisville Metro Operate a Syringe Exchange Program (SEP)?***

- **Syringe exchange programs have been proven to prevent the spread of diseases such as HIV, and hepatitis.**

The science is clear about the value of clean syringe exchanges. Public health bodies ranging from the American Medical Association to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to several U.S. surgeon generals have all endorsed syringe exchanges. A 2005 study found that HIV rates **decreased** by nearly 6% in cities that had syringe exchange programs compared to a national **increase** of nearly 6% per year. The number of HIV cases linked to intravenous drug use dropped by 80 percent in Washington D.C. from 2007 to 2011, with the number of cases decreasing from 149 to 30.

- **IV drug users can spread HIV, not just among themselves, but to non-drug users throughout the community.**

Preventing HIV infection in people who inject drugs also prevents HIV in women and newborn children. Many women who do not use drugs are at risk for HIV because of they are sexual partners of injection drug users. **Syringe exchange programs can prevent mother-to baby HIV transmission.**

- **Syringe exchanges also lead addicted individuals to seek testing, counseling and treatment.**

Syringe exchange programs bring drug addicted individuals in contact with the health system where can they be tested for HIV and hepatitis and, if positive, be treated. Syringe exchange programs can make drug treatment options known to addicted individuals using the syringe exchange. Studies show that program participants were five times more likely to enter drug treatment than IV drug users who did not participate in syringe exchange programs.

- **Syringe exchange programs can lead IV drug users to reduce risky behaviors.**

According to the National Institute of Health, persons who inject drugs who have access to clean needles reduce risky behaviors by “as high as 80%.” Syringe exchange is a best practice harm reduction model to reduce public health problems associated with blood-borne diseases.

- **Syringe exchanges do not lead to increased IV drug use in the cities that implement them.**

Many scientific studies, including a Surgeon General’s report, show that syringe exchange do not increase drug use when conducted with referrals to both drug treatment and HIV and Hepatitis C testing, medical care and support services.

- **Syringe exchanges reduce the number of contaminated needles in the streets.**

Syringe exchange and disposal programs actually encourage individuals to bring back used syringes to trade them in at the syringe exchange site. A study published in the American Journal of Public Health showed that San Francisco’s syringe exchange program reduced the risk from infectious syringes left by

injection drug users. The study based on a survey of more than 600 injection drug users and a visual inspection of 1,000 city blocks in areas heavily trafficked by drug users.

- **Syringe exchange programs are cost effective and prevent much more costly treatments for diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C.**

The cost of providing hepatitis C treatment ranges from **\$84,000 to \$300,000 per person**. The cost of treating someone with HIV is as high as **\$648,000 over the person's lifetime**. **The cost of preventing drug-related infection is 150 times more cost efficient than the cost of treating disease spread by infected syringes.**

### **Key Facts about Louisville Metro's Syringe Exchange Program**

- The goal of the Louisville Metro Syringe Exchange program is to reduce the transmission of blood-borne diseases including HIV and hepatitis C among persons who inject drugs, among their sexual partners and their newborn children.
- The 2015 Kentucky legislature passed bills allowing local health departments to operate substance abuse outreach programs which include syringe exchange programs. On March 25, 2015 Governor Steve Beshear signed KRS218A.500 into law. The Louisville Metro Council enacted legislation (Ordinance No. 58, Series 2015) to enable the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness to set up a needle exchange program for the city and Mayor Greg Fischer signed the bill on April 23, 2015. The Louisville Metro Board of Health unanimously voted its support on May 6, 2015.
- Volunteers from fifteen agencies across Louisville have partnered with the Department of Public Health and Wellness to form a workgroup focusing on program design and implementation, researching best practices and surveying the number IV drug users currently in treatment. Workgroup agencies include the 550 Clinic; AIDS Interfaith Ministries of Kentucky; the Center for Behavioral Health; COPES Inc.; Family Health Centers, Phoenix; Kentuckiana AIDS Association; Louisville Metro Department of Corrections; Louisville Metro Emergency Medical Services; Louisville Metro Police Department; Metro Louisville Harm Reduction Task Force; Neighborhood Place Fairdale; Seven County Services, Inc., Jefferson Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center; University Hospital Emergency Department; and University of Louisville School of Public Health and Information Sciences.
- The Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness will operate a syringe exchange site in a mobile unit adjacent its headquarters on Gray St. A licensed substance abuse counselor will provide staffing for the site with street level outreach and support from Volunteers of America of Kentucky.
- Preliminary operating hours are Monday, Friday, and Saturday from 11:00am until 2:00pm and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 3:00pm until 6:00pm. These are flexible times and may change depending on the needs of participants.

- The syringe exchange will provide free syringes, HIV testing and prevention supplies, as well as education regarding hepatitis C transmission, sexually transmitted diseases, wound care, and proper syringe disposal. Syringes will be made available regardless of whether the client has needles to exchange. However, clients will be strongly encouraged to return their used syringes.
- Access to these services is voluntary and at the participant's request. A *Participant Rights and Responsibilities* form will be reviewed with each participant at the time of program enrollment.
- Referrals will be made for those who have tested HIV positive as well as those seeking drug treatment, and other health and social services. Participants will be educated on addiction treatment options and referred to the appropriate treatment upon their request.
- The Seven Counties Services, Inc., Jefferson Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center (JADAC) will assign an addictions treatment case manager to the syringe exchange program whose responsibility is to inform participants and make treatment referrals. The case manager will be available to syringe exchange staff and participants 30 hours per week and some evenings. The case manager will be knowledgeable of all community treatment resources (such as Methadone, Suboxone, detox, residential, outpatient, recovery centers, and 12 step groups) and keep syringe exchange staff informed of any changes in treatment resources.
- Naloxone, a medication that is used to prevent overdose from opiates, will be kept on site and syringe exchange staff will be trained in the appropriate administration in case of an overdose by a participant while on-site. Syringe exchange participants wishing to take home naloxone in case of future overdoses will be referred to the Louisville Metro Harm Reduction Taskforce who provides naloxone along with education about proper use.
- The Louisville Syringe Exchange Program will be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness. Evaluators will employ a range of data sources including quarterly reports, periodic surveys of program participants, data on drug treatment referrals and on rates of HIV, hepatitis C and other blood borne infections.
- All Louisville Syringe Exchange staff and volunteers have undergone training from the Harm Reduction Coalition, a CDC recognized agency that provides training throughout the nation on syringe exchange programs. Staff will also be trained in cultural sensitivity, HIV and viral hepatitis transmission and prevention, polysubstance use, conflict resolution and de-escalation, specialized interviewing techniques, principles of case management, abscess and cellulitis treatment and prevention, domestic violence issues and co-occurring behavioral health and substance use disorders.
- For additional information visit <http://louisvilleky.gov/government/health-wellness/needle-exchange-program> or call 502 574-6520.