

Our File/N/Réf.
Your File/V/Réf. RC

DATE 29 March 2000

TO/DEST. Coordinator
 Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Medical Officer of Health

SUBJECT/OBJET **UPDATE ON THE SITE HIV PREVENTION PROGRAM**

INTRODUCTION

On January 14, 1999, Community Services Committee received the report "SITE HIV Prevention Program" presented by the Health Department and approved the following:

1. That a Community Advisory Committee and a Needle Exchange Network be developed to increase community and agency involvement;
2. That safe zones be established as outlined in this report;
3. That the current needle/syringe exchange policy be expanded to include procedures to manage low needle return rates as outlined in the report;
4. That a needle/syringe clean up program for Ottawa-Carleton be developed as outlined in this report;
5. That there be a pilot project for an incentive program to increase needle/syringe returns to the SITE program;
6. That the community education program on the SITE program and on safe needle disposal be enhanced, with input from the Community Advisory Committee to be developed.

At the Regional Council Meeting on January 27th, 1999 the above recommendations were approved with the addition of the following:

7. The funds (\$10,000) required for the community clean-up, and disposal be added to the Health Department estimates.

8. That the report be considered Regional Policy, and that this policy not apply to partner agencies entering safe zones to conduct needle exchanges in private, i.e., inside residences, health centres, offices, etc.

BACKGROUND

Over the last year, the SITE program has increased its efforts to collaborate with community associations, groups and agencies in improving harm reduction services for the injection drug using population. The SITE has increased its partnerships to twelve agencies who offer needle exchange services and include health centres, shelters and day drop in centres. A needle-syringe clean up partnership with Centre 507 has worked tremendously at cleaning up used, discarded needles-syringes. The SITE is also significantly involved in the Region's response to safe needle-syringe disposal.

DISCUSSION

Community Participation

The SITE program is participating in a Community Advisory Committee on Syringe Programs. The Committee has been meeting bi-monthly since March, 1999. Currently, the mailing list consists of 29 members from various associations and groups as well as Health Department staff. Approximately 6-10 people attend the meetings. Terms of reference have been developed and approved by the Committee (see Annex A). The Committee has identified specific learning needs about addictions and treatment issues. Agencies involved in treatment and addictions have been invited to present at meetings.

The Needle Exchange Network. has also been meeting bi-monthly to discuss program issues and standards of practice. There are 11 needle exchange partner agencies who participate in this Network. The member agencies appreciate the consistent contact and assistance with program development. They are informed about the work of the Community Advisory Committee on Syringe Programs.

A significant issue that has arisen for the Advisory Committee and the Network is the concern about addiction treatment. The treatment options available in Ottawa-Carleton are extremely limited and overloaded. More resources are desperately needed to expand current programs as well as offer new harm reduction treatment opportunities. Detox beds are overwhelmed and have to turn away clients every night. Support services for those who are finished treatment are few. More resources are needed to assist people in their post recovery phase.

Safe Zones

Safe zones have been implemented around schools, parks and day-care centres to protect children and others at risk from coming in contact with used needles/syringes. Safe zones prohibit needle/syringe

distribution within 100 metres of designated locations. The SITE staff educate clients about these limits, however, some clients still flag the van down wherever they see it. The SITE staff are obligated to stop to respond to the client. No needles are given out in the safe zone. The van does not park in the safe zone. Information is given about the safe zone and the client is asked to meet the van at another location. Clients are learning to accept this condition. The SITE program and community members are still working on the refinement of safe zone boundaries.

The SITE program, with the assistance of the Advisory Committee, is identifying potential locations for van stops. Designated stops increase the consistency of SITE service to clients. The stops may reduce the travel of the van through residential areas and safe zones but will not stop it completely. It is a difficult, time-consuming process. Each location has positive and negative repercussions. Community consultations about potential locations are important to the process. Discussions are continuing regarding this issue.

Needle/Syringe Exchange Policy

The SITE program continues its needle exchange policy to encourage clients to return used needles. Partner agencies are also following this policy. Clients are responsive to the education about safe needle disposal. In 1999, the overall neighbourhood exchange rate was 109% with a range of 84.4% to 140.4%. In terms of program size, Ottawa has the second highest exchange rate. Sudbury has the highest exchange rate but does not operate a mobile service.

Incentives for Return of Used Needles/Syringes

In November 1999, the SITE program developed an incentive project with input from the Advisory Committee. The project took place during AIDS Awareness Week to promote HIV prevention through used needle return. The incentive project involved a raffle for a fleecy jacket that clients were eligible for if they returned needles to the van. Each time a client returned needles, s/he received a ticket for the draw. The project occurred over two weeks with over 60 clients taking part. Clients were very interested in the project and plans are underway to offer another one later this year.

Discarded Needle/Syringe Pick Up and Reporting of Found Needles

Discarded needle reporting is available by calling the Region's 24 Hour Call Centre. Once the call is received, the Centre has a protocol to follow (see Annex B). If no action is required, the Call Centre logs the information and forwards it to the Health Department on a weekly basis.

From April to December 1999, the Health Department operated a needle clean up program for the SITE van route and other areas where needles had been found. The project was conducted in partnership with Centre 507 and Rideau Street Youth Enterprises. A total of 462 discarded needles were recovered. Plans are underway to significantly expand the clean up program for 2000. The

Health Department has expanded the budget of the needle clean up program from \$10,000.00 to \$40,000.00 for spring 2000.

To encourage clients to return used needles, the SITE program was offering a new disposal container. This container is smaller and more discrete than other containers. Clients are very pleased with this product and requests for it are increasing. Unfortunately, the FITPACK are no longer available from the distributors due to substantial increase in cost by the manufacturer. The SITE program is investigating similar products.

Client education about safe needle disposal is also being expanded. The Advisory Committee has assisted the SITE program in developing a pamphlet on needle disposal. The pamphlet is a helpful tool to encouraging client interest in community safety.

Needle disposal bins are also another method for needle disposal. These large, tamper-proof bins are being piloted within two community agencies. Once they have been evaluated, the next step is to install the bins in and outside other locations as appropriate. Communities are asked to be involved in discussions prior to any installation. The bins may also be used in regional facilities to offer the public more locations to dispose of used needles (i.e., diabetics).

Public Education

The Region has developed a corporate response to the issue of safe needle disposal. Used needles from diabetics, veterinarians, injection drug users, etc., will no longer be accepted into regular garbage. Cooperation between the Region's Take it Back Program, Solid Waste Division, Health Department, waste haulers and recycling plants have resulted in a safer disposal mechanism. Plans are underway to develop a public awareness campaign that involves the Diabetic Association, the Hepatitis C Society, the Pharmacists Associations, the Veterinarians Association and the Region. Safer methods of needle disposal have been needed in Ottawa-Carleton for many years. Ottawa-Carleton is the first city to address this serious issue.

New Initiatives

The Community Advisory Committee and the SITE program have been pursuing research on both coloured needles and retractable needles. The Committee is planning to meet with one needle manufacturer to discuss these initiatives.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Members of the Community Advisory Committee and the Needle Exchange Network continue to provide invaluable assistance and input into the SITE program initiatives.

*Original signed by Dr. R. Cushman
Medical Officer of Health*

Community Advisory Committee on Syringe Programs

Terms of Reference

Name:

Community Advisory Committee on Syringe Programs

Mission:

To advise the SITE Program of the Region of Ottawa-Carleton Health Department on improved syringe exchange and disposal methods as well as provide recommendations on all program operations and support programs that reduce drug use.

Committee Values and Beliefs:

1. The incidence of HIV in intravenous drug users in Ottawa-Carleton is at epidemic levels. We, as community members, are gravely concerned.
2. Injection drug users need access to sterile injection equipment though the provision of a quality syringe exchange program responsible to the safety concerns of the community.
3. Syringe exchange is a harm reduction strategy to reduce transmission of HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and other blood-borne infections and associated diseases.
4. Responsible syringe exchange does not compromise the safety and health of communities.
5. Improperly discarded syringes pose a serious health hazard and must be cleaned up throughout the Ottawa-Carleton region.

Terms of appointment:

Chair is elected for up to a two year period.

Membership:

- The Committee shall consist of one voting member of a community association, school parent advisory committee, business association or recognized community group involved in safety issues.
- Staff will act as a resource to the Committee.

Frequency of Meetings:

Bi-monthly or at the call of the chair.

Reporting Relationship:

Report to the SITE Program of the Ottawa-Carleton Health Department.

Relationship to other Groups:

Liaison meetings will be held with the Needle Exchange Network every 6 months.

ANNEX A

December 7, 1999

Regional 24 Hour Call Centre Needle-Syringe Reporting

Handling Calls Concerning Discarded Needles-Syringes

All calls regarding discarded needles-syringes are referred to the Regional 24 Hour Call Centre. The general public are asked to call 560-1335 to report discarded needles-syringes found in Ottawa-Carleton. Some callers will require needle-syringe disposal assistance.

Record all caller information on the *Needle-Syringe Report* form (see attached).

If the caller does not require assistance but is calling to make a report, record information on the *Needle-Syringe Report* form for statistical purposes.

If the caller requires assistance:

⇒ Determine geographical location of the needle-syringe.

***If the caller is a CHILD with no adult accompaniment, call the police at 236-1222 ext. 7500 to respond in all cases (if you encounter any problems when calling the police, please call extension 2525 (Jackie Arthur or Rita Pettes to report the problem). Tell the child not to touch the needle-syringe. Inform police that a child is near by and they will respond immediately.**

A. On Public Property *:

1. Regional staff call the appropriate city works department to report the discarded needle-syringe.
2. Inform caller that you are contacting the city works department of that area.
3. Inform caller that there may be a time delay before a worker can respond.
4. If the caller can not wait for city response, **Call Centre staff** call:
 - a) between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Mon-Fri Jackie Arthur or Rita Pettes at extension 2525 if the caller feels that it is Urgent that the needle is picked up;
 - b) between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Mon-Fri Health Department Environmental Health Inspection Duty phone at 722-2200.
 - c) from 4:30 p.m. Fri to 8:00 am Mon, refer to the Environmental Health Inspector on call (see list at the Call Centre)

AFTER HOURS BETWEEN 4:30 P.M. AND 6:30 P.M.

If the caller feels it is urgent that the needle is picked up, call the police at 236-1222 ext. 7500..

AFTER HOURS BETWEEN 6:30 AND 11:30

If the caller feels it is urgent that the needle is picked up, call the SITE Van at 797-2735.

A. On Private Property *:

1. Advise caller of the proper procedure for needle-syringe clean up (see attached).
2. Call the SITE 232-3232 voice mail and leave the caller's name, address and phone number.

Regional 24 Hour Call Centre Needle-Syringe Reporting

3. Inform caller that they will be called by the SITE van to arrange collection of the needle-syringe. The caller should keep the needle-syringe in a puncture-proof plastic container and cover it with bleach. Store it in a safe place until it is collected.
4. If needle-syringe can not be picked up by the caller, **Call Centre staff** call:
 - a) between 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Mon-Fri Jackie Arthur or Rita Pettes at extension 2525;
 - b) between 6:30 p.m. - 11:30 p.m. Sun-Sat the SITE van 797-2735;
 - c) between 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Mon-Fri Health Department Environmental Health Inspection Duty phone at 722-2200.
 - d) on weekends from 4:30 p.m. Fri to 8:00 a.m. Mon, refer to the Environmental Health Inspector on Call (see list at the Call Centre)
5. If it is an emergency, call the Police Communication Centre 236-1222 ext. 7500 and request that a police officer be dispatched to dispose of the needle-syringe.
6. If the police are responding, inform caller that there may be a time delay.

B. Ownership of Property Unclear *:

Call Centre staff call the Health Department Environmental Health Inspection Duty Phone 722-2200 to respond to clean up the area and determine property ownership. If it is on a weekend, refer to the Environmental Health Inspector on Call (see list at the Call Centre)

For more information, contact Jackie Arthur or Rita Pettes, HIV Prevention Program, Region of Ottawa-Carleton Health Department 560-6095 ext. 2525.