

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AIDS INSTITUTE

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

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SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Section 80.135 of Title 10 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, Authorization to Conduct Hypodermic Syringe and Needle Exchange Programs, requires that all organizations approved by the State Health Commissioner to conduct syringe exchange programs (SEPs) in New York State must develop and adhere to policies and procedures approved by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) AIDS Institute.

The following policies and procedures have been developed for use as *guidelines* by approved programs in developing their own policies and procedures, and to ensure that organizations operating syringe exchange programs in New York are in compliance with State regulations governing those programs. The policies and procedures within these guidelines will serve to clarify the requirements contained in the regulations and assist syringe exchange programs in the safe and responsible performance of this HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C prevention intervention.

It is strongly recommended that a separate page be used for each specific policy and procedures to facilitate updates and revisions to the document. The policies and procedures should be written in the following format:

Subject of policy:

Policy:

Procedures - steps taken to carry out the aforementioned policy:

1a:

1b:

1c:

I. TRAINING FOR SEP STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Policy: All SEP staff, peers and volunteers who collect or furnish syringes, male or female condoms, bleach kits and/or other harm reduction materials to SEP participants must complete a proper course of training *as appropriate to their level of involvement in program activities*.

Procedures: Mandated trainings shall be provided by various entities as approved by the New York State Department of Health. Staff of the AIDS Institute's Harm Reduction Unit (HRU) will arrange and facilitate training provided by NYSDOH, and identify and approve training provided by other sources.

A. Mandated trainings on the following topics must be provided by the SEP to SEP staff, peers, and volunteers conducting syringe exchange. The topics to be covered include:

- 1a. Orientation to the agency's array of services and eligibility requirements per program;
 - 1b. Overview of harm reduction philosophy and the harm reduction model used by the syringe exchange program;
 - 1c. New York State syringe exchange regulations (Section 80.135 of Title 10 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, Authorization to Conduct Hypodermic Syringe and Needle Exchange Programs);
 - 1d. Agency's approved policies and procedures that cover syringe exchange transactions, handling disposal of infectious waste, and needlestick prevention management.
 - 1e. Procedures that ensure secure storage, handling and disposal of syringes in accordance with State law and regulations;
 - 1f. Procedures for making referrals, including primary care, detox and drug treatment, HIV counseling and testing, prenatal care, tuberculosis and Hepatitis A, B and C screening and treatment, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and other HIV support and social services;
 - 1g. Methods of outreach to engage target populations;
 - 1h. Hierarchy of risks associated with sexual and drug-using behaviors and risk reduction practices for those behaviors;
 - 1i. Education and demonstration of safer injection practices, including techniques for disinfecting injection equipment, rotation of injection sites and the use of alcohol pads to disinfect injection sites;
 - 1j. Cultural diversity including sensitivity to race/ethnicity, age, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, literacy, socio-economic status and employment status.
-
- 2a. Each agency must have at least one staff person assigned as the designated trainer to conduct "in-house" trainings. The trainer's credentials must be submitted to the AIDS Institute for review.
 - 2b. Each agency must maintain training logs and attendance sheets for all trainings provided to SEP staff, peers and volunteers. The training log must include the name of the training and trainer, date, location and agenda/topics covered. The attendance sheet must record the names of all staff, peers and volunteers who received the training, date and agenda/topics. A copy of the attendance sheet or a certificate of completion must be maintained in the personnel/training record for each SEP staff, peer and volunteer.

- B. Mandated training for SEP staff, peers and volunteers that must be provided by NYSDOH or other approved sources within three months of employment.** Training topics include:
- 1a. Needlestick Injury Prevention and Management includes in-depth training on the procedures for handling potentially infectious injection equipment, disposal of hazardous waste, the prevention and handling of needlestick injuries, and control of exposure to bloodborne pathogens and accident reporting procedures;
 - 1b. NYSDOH Rules and Regulations regarding Syringe Exchange, Expanded Syringe Access and Opioid Overdose Prevention Programs.
 - 1c. Law Enforcement training including an overview of NYSDOH Syringe Access Initiatives, training/education of law enforcement, what clients should do when stopped by police etc.
 - 1d. Mandated trainings will be offered on a quarterly basis.
- C. Mandated clinical education training for SEP staff, etc. that will be provided by NYSDOH or other approved source.** Training topics include:
- 1a. Information about Hepatitis A and B screening, vaccination, treatment.
 - 1b. Information about Hepatitis C screening and treatment.
 - 1c. Basic overview of HIV disease, including modes of transmission, prevention, spectrum of illness, opportunistic infections, medications/treatment and treatment adherence;
 - 1d. Specific training on tuberculosis transmission, prevention, spectrum of illness, and prophylactic treatments and treatment for active disease; and
 - 1e. Overview of other diseases prevalent in substance using populations, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs), endocarditis and abscesses, including infection control precautions.
- D. Recommended trainings for SEP staff, peers, and/or volunteers provided by other sources.** Training topics include:
- 1a. Addiction and recovery processes, including relapse and relapse prevention. Additional training/support on relapse prevention will be given to SEP staff and volunteers who are former or recovering substance users. This training may be provided by other available sources outside the program, such as consultants, substance abuse treatment providers, the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), etc.
 - 1b. Behavioral Interventions including Stages of Change, Harm Reduction, Safety Counts, SISTA etc. and integration of these strategies into educational and support sessions.
 - 1c. Enhanced outreach including client recruitment, program promotion, motivational interviewing.
 - 1d. Data collection and evaluation including the use of AIDS Institute mandated data collection systems and software, process and outcome evaluation and client satisfaction surveys.
 - 1e. Interpersonal skills development including how to work with difficult people, active substance users and setting boundaries.
 - 1f. Communication skills (both verbal and written) and presentation skills.
 - 1g. Skills building related to safer sex and safer injection education.
- E. Trainings may be provided by sources outside of the program as approved by NYSDOH:** Training topics listed in Sections C and D above may be provided by the following sources when approved by the Department of Health:
1. New York State and New York City Departments of Health;
 2. Hunter College Center on AIDS, Drugs and Community Health;
 3. Community-based agencies providing HIV/AIDS services;
 4. Consultants;
 5. Staff of approved syringe exchange programs and
 6. Other training sources approved by the New York State Department of Health.

II. STAFF SECURITY AND SAFETY

Policy: All SEP staff, peers, and volunteers must observe proper safety and security precautions during syringe exchange operations.

Procedures: All SEP staff who conduct syringe exchange must attend a Needlestick Injury Prevention and Management training prior to participating in SEP operations. Training topics include procedures for handling potentially infectious injection equipment, waste disposal, and the prevention and management of needlestick injuries.

A. Prevention of Needlestick Injuries: To prevent needlestick injuries to agency personnel and participants, the following procedures must always be followed:

- 1a. SEP staff, peers, volunteers and participants must be educated regarding safety precautions for carrying and handling of syringes and other sharps, emphasizing the agency's safety policies and procedures during transactions.
- 1b. Staff, peers and volunteers conducting syringe exchange must never handle or touch used injection equipment.**
- 1c. SEP sites must have the following safety equipment available during exchange operations: puncture-resistant utility gloves, bleach, forceps or tongs. All could be used in the event of container spill.
- 1d. All SEP staff/peers/volunteers should be encouraged to wear protective clothing for protection against needlestick. This includes long pants and closed footwear.
- 1e. Areas where SEP operations are conducted should have adequate lighting.
- 1f. All used injection equipment collected by the program must be placed in approved leak-proof, rigid, puncture-resistant containers (sharps containers). Used containers must be conspicuously labeled by the SEP as "Contains Sharps".
- 1g. During syringe exchange transactions, sharps containers should be placed between the participants and staff/volunteers.
- 1h. Containers should be placed on a secure table or on the ground and kept level at all times. SEP personnel should never hold sharps containers during exchange.
- 1i. Injection equipment that falls outside of sharps containers should be retrieved by participants and placed in sharps containers. If this is not possible, program staff/peers/volunteers should use tongs to retrieve used injection equipment that falls outside the container.
- 1j. Participants should be instructed to recap all their own used syringes. If caps are not available, participants should be urged to cover used needles with cigarette filters, corks, or other similar protective materials. SEP staff, peers, volunteers and participants should be instructed never to recap syringes used by anyone else.
- 1k. If necessary, SEP staff, peers and volunteers should remind participants not to crowd the exchange area(s).
- 1l. Hazardous waste (sharps containers) should NEVER be filled beyond the manufacturer's fill line. Containers should never be more than 3/4 full.
- 1m. SEP staff/peers/volunteers/participants should be instructed never to insert their hands into sharps containers or forcibly push used injection equipment down into containers beyond openings at the top.**
- 1n. Program staff/peers/volunteers are encouraged to wear puncture-resistant utility gloves at all times when opening, sealing, or handling sharps containers.
- 1o. All SEP staff/peers/volunteers involved in the transport of hazardous waste must receive appropriate training in handling and disposal procedures. Only staff/volunteers receiving such training are authorized to transport waste.
- 1p. Sharps containers must be properly sealed and placed in leakproof, disposable cartons with lids that close securely. These cartons must be conspicuously labeled "Contains Sharps".

B. Handling Needlestick Injuries. In the event of a needlestick or other occupational exposure, the following protocol should be followed:

1. Agencies should designate Needlestick Managers, who should be present during SEP operations. They are responsible for 1) handling and assisting injured staff/peers/volunteers/participants; and 2) following the procedures for accident or incident reporting.
2. Injured staff/peers/volunteers/participants must report incidents immediately to the Needlestick Manager at the exchange site.
3. Needlestick Managers should immediately notify the ranking supervisor. Injured persons should go to emergency room or a private physician preferably within 3 hours of the needlestick but not more than 24 hours after the occurrence. If assistance is needed in securing immediate emergency care, SEP personnel should call the Office of the Medical Director's (OMD) cell phone and either seek assistance from the respondent or leave a message. If OMD does not respond within 15 minutes, another call should be placed to the cell phone number.
 - a. Telephone the on-call physician at 1-212-417-4536 (Monday-Friday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm) or 1-917-658-4385 (during all other hours) and describe the situation and difficulties being experienced in securing care. If there is no answer leave a message for on-call staff.
 - b. Messages should state that there has been a needlestick injury at (SEP name). Leave the name and phone number of person to call back. Be sure to speak clearly to ensure that an accurate message is delivered and can be responded to by OMD. If you do not receive a response within 15 minutes, call the OMD phone number again. You may leave additional information, such as an alternate phone number.
 - c. If there is still no response, call NYSDOH at 1-866-881-2809. Press the first option on the automatic menu. This will connect you with the DOH Duty Officer. Inform the DOH Duty Officer that the back-up needlestick medical provider should be contacted. Again, leave the name and telephone number of the person who should be contacted.
 - d. In emergency care sites, injured persons should be offered counseling and testing for HIV, Hepatitis B and C, and other blood-borne pathogens.
4. Once the emergency is managed, a SEP Exposure Incident Report form (see sample attached) must be prepared and submitted to the AIDS Institute within twenty-four (24) hours of the occurrence. Agencies must retain copies of all SEP Exposure Incident Reports.

III. DETERMINING PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Policy: Individuals requesting syringe exchange services will be screened and must meet program eligibility criteria in order to be enrolled in SEPs.

Procedures: SEP staff will use the following screening process for program eligibility.

- A. Initial Visits:** trained SEP staff/peers/volunteers should perform low threshold screening/assessments to determine program eligibility. SEP screening should include assessment of:
- 1) Type of substances/drugs used;
 - 2) Description of injection practices, e.g. route of administration;
 - 3) Number of years injecting;
 - 4) Frequency of injection and
 - 5) Other appropriate information needed to determine eligibility.

This assessment shall be done prior to enrolling a person in the SEP and issuing an identification card.

- B. Indigent insulin injectors may be enrolled in syringe exchange if:**
- 1) Individuals do not have private insurance or Medicaid to purchase syringes;
 - 2) Private insurance or Medicaid will not supply a sufficient number of syringes for individuals to have new, sterile syringes for each injection and
 - 3) Special circumstances exist which do not allow the individual to have a new, sterile syringe for every injection.

IV. ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

Policy: All syringe exchange participants are issued a SEP identification card with the clients' personal unique identifier.

Procedures: SEP staff/peers/volunteers issue SEP identification cards with unique identifiers as described below.

A. Issuing Participant Identification Cards.

- 1a. Each individual who meets program eligibility criteria and is enrolled in the SEP must be issued an identification card and assigned a unique I.D. code. If a participant refuses to accept his/her identification card, SEP staff must advise the individual of the possible legal consequences of possessing syringes without the ability to demonstrate that he/she participates in an authorized SEP.
- 1b. The SEP will order identification cards from NYSDOH. The card will contain the name and address of the main agency site, contact telephone number for NYSDOH/AI/HRU (for business hours) and a 24 hour emergency telephone number for the agency's SEP program. The back side of the card will contain references to the Public Health Law that authorizes SEP and numbers for NYPD's SEP/ESAP Operations Order.
- 1c. The unique identifier on the ID Card is created using the instructions and formula for I.D. codes. An anonymous unique identifier ("I.D. code") is created for each participant. The anonymous unique identifier that is created must be recorded at enrollment and used during subsequent exchange transactions to collect program utilization information.
- 1d. The formula for constructing the I.D. code must be used consistently when creating unique identifier I.D. codes. The codes may vary from agency to agency, but all unique identifiers within an agency should consist of the same combination of letters and numbers usually representing the participant's initials, mother's maiden name, year/day of birth, race/ethnicity, gender and other characteristics as dictated by the agency in its waiver application. However constructed, the I.D. code should be easily replicable by the program participant for identification purposes in cases when the ID card is lost or when involved with law enforcement.

B. Obtaining and Recording Participant Information.

- 1a. At an individual's first visit to the syringe exchange, trained program staff/peer/volunteers will request and record the information/characteristics that are needed for the creation of the unique identifier (year/date of birth, age, race/ethnicity, and gender of the enrollee).
- 1b. No corresponding record should be kept that may be used to identify the participant via his/her anonymous unique identifier.
- 1c. Law enforcement entities requesting information on a specific participant based on his/her ID card code, may be given the basic information contained in the code. If the SEP has the name, address or other contact information for the participant, it should not be revealed under ordinary circumstances without written consent of the participant. Exceptions may include requests for identification in cases involving a fatality (OD or accident and law enforcement is trying to identify the deceased and/or next of kin). For these types of situations, agency's release of specific identifying information, if available, is at the discretion of the agency.

C. Definition of an Enrolled Program Participant.

- 1a. A program participant is defined as a person who has met the program's eligibility criteria and has been issued a SEP identification card with a unique program identification code.

V. ASSESSMENT AND SERVICE REFERRAL OF INJECTION DRUG USERS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

Policy: A special assessment must be conducted for drug users under 18 years of age who request enrollment in syringe exchange programs.

Procedures: The following describes the special assessment process for enrolling drug users under 18 years of age.

- A.** If under 18, program staff/peers/volunteers must perform individual assessments that elicit information on:
1. Duration and frequency of use; type of drugs used; routes of administration;
 2. Drug treatment: previous treatment, if any, treatment referrals/preferences;
 3. Housing status: stable place to stay, living with friends, “business” housing, homeless, where housed, stability of housing;
 4. Nutritional status: has regular source of meals; has meals in soup kitchens or at special programs; no regular meals;
 5. Support Systems: family composition, active connection to family and friends, contact person (if acceptable to potential client) and level of support;
 6. Means of financial support: independent; benefits; insurance (private or Medicaid); panhandles in street/subway;
 7. Educational status: literacy level, school status, need for GED;
 8. Medical status: need for medical intervention; HIV status; HCV status; chronic conditions; medication history/access to medications.

SEP staff may need more than one assessment session with youth as they may need to develop trust to disclosure of personal information. Syringes may be furnished at the first encounter even if additional sessions are needed to complete the assessment.

- B.** Program staff/peers/volunteers must offer referrals for needed services including: substance use treatment, health care, housing, etc., as needed. SEP staff are responsible for following up on referrals with participants. Note: Although SEP staff are responsible for making appropriate referrals, participants are not required to accept or follow-up with them.
- C.** Staff should continue to make referrals at subsequent visits, if initial offers for referral(s) are declined.
- D.** Young participants should be encouraged to participate in behavioral interventions and skills building counseling related to safer injection, safer sex and asset development.

VI. DISTRIBUTION AND COLLECTION OF SYRINGES

Policy: Syringes will be furnished and collected according to the agency's protocols as described in its authorized SEP waiver application or as subsequently revised and approved by NYSDOH.

Procedures: The following describes the process to be used to furnish and collect syringes through the agency's syringe exchange program:

A. Syringe Exchange Protocol.

- 1a. The goal of syringe exchange programs is to furnish new, sterile syringes to enrolled participants to enable those individuals to use a new sterile syringe for every injection.
- 1b. SEP regulations mandate that the program indicate the number of syringes that may be provided per transaction. Since enrolled participants' needs vary, the SEP should set a number up to 600 for the number of syringes that may be provided in a single transaction.
- 1c. The number of syringes that may be furnished in a syringe exchange transaction should be the number of syringes individual participants need to meet the goal in 1(a) - a new sterile syringe for every injection as is possible up to 600 syringes.
- 1d. SEP staff must provide an explanation for any entry in the transaction log which exceeds 600 syringes that may be provided in a single transaction. The explanation should be entered on the line in the transaction log for the participant's specific transaction. This is further explained in the section "Contingency Contracting".
- 1e. SEPs may submit a request to the AIDS Institute's Harm Reduction Unit to change the number of syringes issued for a single syringe exchange transaction. The letter of request must contain the information/justification for the change(s) as outlined in AI/HRU's "Syringe Exchange Protocols - Request to Change the Number of Syringes".

B. Syringes Issued During a Transaction:

1. The number of syringes that are furnished in a transaction must 1) reflect the number authorized in the agency's SEP waiver application; or 2) the number of syringes subsequently approved from an agency request to change the number of syringes; or 3) be up to 600 syringes. Failure to return used syringes should not be a reason for limiting the number of syringes provided to a participant or instituting any other punitive measure.
2. The number of syringes that the SEP requests to furnish in a single transaction, should be based upon:
 - a) number of days and hours of SEP operations at each exchange location;
 - b) drug of choice of the majority of participants (e.g. cocaine injectors will use more syringes than heroin injectors if they use a new, sterile syringe for each shot)
 - c) frequency of participants' visits (e.g. consider distance to travel to SEP; cost of travel to SEP, intensity of law enforcement's activities around the SEP site);
 - d) special circumstances (consider participant's ability to come to the SEP based on employment status, homelessness, school attendance, care taking responsibilities , etc.)
3. SEP participants are instructed to return all used syringes at the next visit to the agency.
4. Each participant is offered harm reduction supplies including: cotton, alcohol pads, male and female condoms, dental dams, bottle caps, band-aids, sharps container(s), personal sharps containers (as available), bleach bottles, water bottles, paper or plastic bags, other supplies as available, and educational materials.

5. Distribution of harm reduction supplies should be accompanied by demonstrations and/or explanations regarding the use of the supplies, especially for male and female condoms, dental dams and bleach kits.
6. Instructions for safe disposal of syringes should be provided to all participants, especially those who indicate they may not be able to return syringes because of special circumstances (increased scrutiny by law enforcement, homelessness, residence has small children, etc.). Safe disposal of syringes includes:

a) Residential Sharps Program: NYS law mandates that Article 28 facilities, hospitals and nursing homes must accept used “sharps ” (syringes, lancets etc.) from NYS residents. Participants should be educated about how to dispose of sharps in Article 28 facilities.

(1) Used “sharps” must be placed in a plastic, puncture resistant, screw top, container (detergent, soda or bleach bottle). Glass containers and coffee cans will not be accepted by Article 28 facilities. The puncture resistant container must be closed and sealed with tape. The container must be labeled “contains sharps”. Participants should be given a list of the locations and hours of local hospitals and nursing homes’ residential sharps disposal programs. “Sharps” collection sites may be located in the lobby, parking lot, endocrine clinic or other location within the Article 28 facility. Participants should report any difficulties they encounter in disposing of syringes in this way to SEP staff. SEP staff in turn should report the problem to the AIDS Institute ESAP/SEP staff.

(2)The AIDS Institute has provided kiosks for syringe disposal to community based organizations and pharmacies that have expressed concern about inappropriate disposal of used syringes. SEPs should provide participants with lists of local CBOs and pharmacies that have kiosks and their hours of operation. Kiosks may be located in the lobby, parking lot, or other site at the CBO or pharmacy.

b) Household garbage: Used sharps may be packaged as in the previous item, 1(g), (a), 1 and disposed of in regular household garbage (unless prohibited by local ordinance). Puncture resistant containers must be sealed and labeled, “contains sharps”, prior to discarding in household trash. Containers full of used “sharps” should never be placed with items being recycled.

c) Syringe Exchange Programs: Individuals should be instructed to return used sharps to the syringe exchange program. They should be informed that used syringes should be returned to the SEP whether or not they were furnished by the SEP.

(1) Syringes that are returned to a SEP in glass jars or coffee cans will be accepted and carefully deposited in a sharps container by the participant. SEP staff will educate participants on the appropriate type of plastic containers that should be used for syringe disposal.

(2) Personal sharps containers (Fitpacks) and FDA approved sharps containers may be discarded.

(3) Participants should be educated about proper disposal of syringes when they are unable to come to the syringe exchange program. Inappropriate methods of syringe disposal such as the following should be discouraged: breaking off the tip and discarding in trash, disposal on the street or other public venues; disposal of used syringes in household garbage or residential sharps programs without containment in sealed, labeled plastic puncture resistant containers, flushing in toilets; disposal of syringes in the trash in glass jars or coffee cans.

(4) Many substance users think that syringes are discarded safely if needles are broken off and thrown in the garbage separate from the barrel of syringes. It is important to educate participants that throwing out needles in this way exposes municipal workers (sanitation) to needlestick injury. If SEP participants are intent on discarding syringes in this manner, they should be encouraged to remove plungers from the barrel of used syringes, place needles in the barrel and replace plungers. This will reduce the risk of needlestick injury to others.

(5) SEP personnel may negotiate the furnishing of more syringes than the approved 600 syringes when participants need more syringes than historically given or there are extenuating circumstances. This ensures participants have new, sterile syringes for each injection. This “contingency contracting” (see next section) is justified and documented on transaction logs.

(6) During syringe exchange transactions, SEP staff should work to establish relationships based on trust. Participants should be empowered to take responsibility for their own harm reduction behavior.

7. Education attempts should be made whenever appropriate or feasible. Topics to discuss include HIV and Hepatitis A, B, C prevention, safer sex, disinfection of syringes (cleaning works) and safer injection techniques. Participants should be encouraged to participate in individual and group delivered behavioral interventions and skills building activities. Although enrollees are offered services in addition to syringe exchange, they are under no obligation to participate in them.

VII. CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING:

Policy: SEP staff may use contingency contracting with participants in order to furnish more than 600 syringes or agencies' approved range. Utility of contingency contracting is that it allows for participants to have new sterile syringes for each injection.

Procedure: When SEP staff use contingency contracting, the following process must be followed.

A. Process to follow:

1. SEP staff/peers/volunteers will utilize "contingency contracting" with participants who need more than 600 syringes or agencies' approved range to ensure that individuals have new, sterile syringe for every injection. Participants will be encouraged to regularly return used syringes or dispose of them safely if returning them is not an option.
2. Programs should furnish sufficient numbers of syringes to ensure that participants do not reuse any syringes. Participants should be repeatedly encouraged to return syringes. In circumstances where participants cannot return syringes, reasons for lack of return must be documented in SEP transaction logs.
3. Failure to return used syringes should not be a reason to limit the number of syringes provided to participants or instituting any other punitive measures.

VIII. PROVIDING HIV PREVENTION EDUCATION

Policy: Program staff/peers/volunteers will provide all syringe exchange participants with HIV and Hepatitis A, B, C prevention education, and information/demonstration/skills building on safer sex and safer injection practices. Such information will be provided verbally and through distribution of culturally sensitive and appropriate printed materials.

Procedures: Agencies will adhere to the NYSDOH's policies regarding materials development and distribution.

A. MATERIALS REVIEW PROCESS

1. Agencies will adhere to all mandated materials development and review processes including convening of materials review committees, convening of focus groups to preview and comment on materials, submitting documentation of materials review committee meetings and outcomes of material reviews.
2. Agencies will submit mandated materials development/review and Internet web site compliance forms to the AIDS Institute in the time frames set by AI.

IX. REFERRING PARTICIPANTS TO OTHER SERVICES

Policy: Agency staff will develop referral linkage agreements with providers of health, supportive services and substance use treatment programs so that SEP participants can receive required services.

Procedure: SEPs will develop appropriate referral linkages with other agencies/entities to ensure that participants will be given all necessary referrals for other needed services.

- A. Developing Referral Linkages.** Under NYS regulations, all authorized syringe exchange programs must maintain referral relationships with other service providers, including, but not limited to: anonymous and confidential HIV counseling and testing services, HIV, Hepatitis A-C and general primary health care facilities, family planning, prenatal and obstetrical care, substance use treatment and related medical services, tuberculosis screening and treatment, sexually transmitted infection screening and treatment, case management and support services for HIV-infected people, and mental health services.
- B. Formalizing Referral Linkages.** Programs must secure written agreements with providers to accept referrals. The AIDS Institute will assist in the development of medical service agreements for expedited treatment and management of needlestick injuries.
- C. Recording Referrals.** Referrals given to syringe exchange participants must be recorded, including date of referrals and type of service to which referrals are made. Monthly and quarterly summaries of all referrals must be reported to the AIDS Institute. Referrals may be made, but participants do not have to accept or follow through on referrals as a condition for SEP participation.
- D. Tracking Referrals.** When possible, programs should track referrals by encouraging participants to self-report outcomes of those referrals. Referral data must be entered into AI's mandated data collection software program. Whenever possible, program staff should follow-up on referrals and document outcomes.

X. TERMINATION OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Policy: Individuals who commit any of the acts listed below may be subject to termination.

Procedure: SEP participants' use of services may be terminated at any time at agencies' discretion based on the following criteria:

- A. Violent behavior against program staff/peers/volunteers, or other participants;
- B. Failure to adhere to program rules and regulations which puts others safety in jeopardy.
- C. Persons terminated from SEPs should be provided with reasons for their termination.
- D. Participants terminated from SEPs will be given lists of other programs and local registered Expanded Syringe Access Program providers.

XI. SECURITY OF SYRINGES AND OTHER SUPPLIES

Policy: SEPs must institute systems to secure and track syringes and other harm reduction supplies stored at the agency.

Procedure: SEP personnel must adhere to the following procedures for ordering, receiving, storing, dispensing and disposing of syringes and other supplies. These procedures include appropriate security precautions and methods for maintaining up-to-date inventory records. In order to prevent possible theft or loss of program supplies, the following operational procedures should always be observed:

A. Ordering and Storage of New Syringes.

1. Syringes should be ordered according to time frames established by the AIDS Institute's contract agency responsible for harm reduction supplies (currently Foundation for AIDS Research/amfAR).
2. Upon receipt of harm reduction supplies ordered from AI's contract agency/amfAR, SEP staff must compare the shipping statement against supplies that were actually delivered. SEP staff should not sign for said supplies if there is a difference between these two amounts. Discrepancies must be reported immediately to the AI's contract agency supplier/amfAR.
3. Supplies should be stored in a locked, secured space. Only authorized individuals should have access to harm reduction supplies that are stored in secured areas.
4. Agencies must maintain written records of names and addresses of persons possessing keys to storage spaces. Keys to storage facilities must be returned to the program immediately upon termination of employment, peer/volunteer status, or when authorization for possession of keys is withdrawn.
5. SEP staff must maintain an inventory of all new, sterile syringes that are at the agency, whether in storage or removed for SEP operations. Inventories must record the date and number of syringes that are received from the AIDS Institute's contract agency supplier/amfAR, amount taken from storage for daily SEP operations, and the number of syringes returned to storage at the end of SEP operations. Inventory sheets must maintain tallies of all syringes in storage and used each day for SEP transactions.
6. At designated intervals (no less than semiannually) a physical count must be made of all syringes in storage by someone other than SEP staff. The number of syringes found during the physical count should match the number listed in SEP inventories. Discrepancies should be immediately reported to the AIDS Institute. Agency staff should work to identify the cause of the discrepancy. Repeated losses/theft should be investigated and, if appropriate, reported to law enforcement.

B. Authorized Access to Syringes and Other Supplies

1. Agencies must designate one primary person and one alternate person to be responsible for ordering and reporting on utilization of supplies. Contact information for them should be sent to the AIDS Institute and the contract supply agency/amfAR. Only these designated persons are authorized to sign supply order forms and have access to locked storage facilities.

C. Handling of Syringes and Other Supplies

1. Harm Reduction supplies removed from storage for SEP operations must be kept within sight of SEP staff/peers/volunteers at all times. **All** program staff and volunteers are responsible for observing proper security precautions. However, one properly trained individual should be designated as having primary responsibility for security during exchange operations. Since staff/peers/volunteers may change at any given site from day to day, programs should rotate this responsibility accordingly.

D. Storage and Disposal of Used Syringes

1. SEPs must adhere to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) procedures regarding disposal of all used syringes and other infectious waste.
2. Medical waste becomes regulated at the point of collection and is subject to procedures for storage and disposal per Title 6 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of State of New York, Part 360 and Part 364. SEPs are required to establish and follow policies and procedures for collection, storage, transportation and disposal of Regulated Medical Waste (RMW):
 - a. **Collection and Storage:** Sharps should be separated from other regulated medical waste. All sharps must be placed in approved leakproof, plastic and rigid, puncture-resistant containers that are conspicuously labeled “contains sharps”. Other regulated medical waste must be placed in red, disposal moisture proof, rip-resistant bags.
 - (1) RMW may be stored at the point of generation until it is retrieved by licensed medical waste haulers for disposal. If SEPs are Article 28 facilities, they will have their own medical waste disposal departments. If used syringes are stored before transporting, medical waste must be kept in locked, secured areas at program sites. Only authorized individuals should have access to locked storage facilities. Used syringes must be stored in appropriate sharps containers at all times.
 - (2) Written records of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of those possessing keys to storage areas must be maintained. If those possessing keys to storage facilities leave, they must return keys to the program immediately.
 - b. **Transport and Disposal of RMW:** Syringe exchange programs should designate individuals who will be authorized to transport RMW. These individuals will receive training on the applicable Department of Environmental Conservation regulations regarding regulated medical waste, and they will be listed on the DEC registration forms as responsible for transport of RMW for that site.
 - (1) Sites that generate less than 50 pounds of RMW a month are considered small quantity generators. From these sites, trained staff may transport the RMW to Article 28 facilities that have disposal agreements with SEPs. RMW must be packaged and labeled correctly. Before transporting RMW, red bags and sharps containers must be placed in leakproof, disposable containers and/or cartons with lids securely closed. These cartons must be labeled "contains sharps".
 - (2) RMW transported to Article 28 facilities for disposal must be weighed at the point of generation prior to transport and must be accompanied by Medical Waste Tracking forms. Forms (see copy attached) must be completed in duplicate and signed by receiving entities. One form is to be kept on file for three years by SEPs and one form is to be kept by disposal facilities.
 - (3) Sites that generate 50 pounds or more of RMW per month are considered large quantity generators. These sites may not transport RMW, but must have it removed by licensed haulers. RMW must be placed in the regulation sharps containers at points of generation and picked up by haulers. Licensed haulers are required to complete tracking forms for waste being collected for disposal.

- 3. Ordering Supplies.** Only those programs authorized by the State Commissioner of Health are permitted to obtain, store and furnish syringes as syringe exchange programs. If SEPs share supplies with other programs, the AIDS Institute and its contract supplier/amfAR must be sent written notification of transfer of supplies. Order forms for supplies, which will be provided by the contract supplier agency/amfAR, must be completed and signed by designated program officers and received by the contract supplier agency/amfAR within the time frame it specifies. Forms may be sent by facsimile or e-mail providing that signed originals are subsequently sent by mail within ten days of the due date. The Harm Reduction Unit of the AIDS Institute and AI contract supplier/amfAR should be notified immediately if any supplies are found to be defective or missing from order deliveries.

SEPs should maintain three month supplies of syringes in their inventories. SEP staff are responsible for managing programs' supply of syringes to ensure that there are adequate number of syringes for SEP transactions at all times. If syringe inventories exceed a three month supply, agencies should not order syringes until the quantity of syringes is reduced to the number needed for three months.

Syringes and some other harm reduction supplies have expiration dates that must be monitored. The SEP should always use a "FIFO" system (First In, First Out) in accessing supplies from inventories.

SEP staff should check expiration dates on all harm reduction supplies to ensure outdated products are not being distributed.

- 4. Theft of Supplies.** Upon discovery of theft of supplies, a report must be filed with police within twenty-four hours. Incident reports must also be filed with the AIDS Institute and AI's contract supplier agency/amfAR within twenty-four hours of the discovery of the theft.

XII. DATA COLLECTION AND PROGRAM REPORTING

Policy: All services provided by the SEP must be entered into the AIDS Institute's mandatory data collection and reporting system.

Procedure: Data entry and SEP staff will be trained on data entry into the AIDS Institute's mandatory data collection and reporting system. Client level and community level information are required inputs.

A. Incident Reports. Incidents involving the syringe exchange program, including community opposition, law enforcement encounters, needlestick injuries, violence at the program site, theft of supplies, potential legal action, media surveillance or incidents against the program must be documented on the forms provided by the AIDS Institute and reported to the Institute within twenty-four hours.

B. Monthly and Quarterly Reports. SEPs must submit monthly narrative and statistical reports and quarterly cumulative statistical reports of funded services to the AIDS Institute no later than 15 days after the end of each month and calendar year quarter. Monthly and quarterly reports shall be in a format provided by the AIDS Institute and shall include but not be limited to:

1. Number of enrolled participants;
2. Aggregate information on participant characteristics (gender, age, race/ethnicity, etc.);
3. Number of syringes collected from participants, including the average number furnished per participant per transaction;
4. Number of syringes furnished to participants, including the average number collected per participant per transaction;
5. Number and types of services directly provided or provided by referral including referrals for HIV counseling and testing; health care services (including evaluation and treatment for HIV infection, Hepatitis A-C, sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis; family planning; obstetrical and prenatal care), supportive services; substance use treatment services; and
6. Significant problems encountered and program milestones achieved.

C. Annual Report. SEPs must submit an annual report of activities, summarizing the information provided on a quarterly basis. The report should compare numbers of projected versus actual services and percentage of service goals reached. Annual reports shall be in a format prescribed by the AIDS Institute and shall contain an evaluation of agencies' progress in attaining program goals. Annual program summary report must be submitted to the AIDS Institute as requested by AI (as part of agencies' annual continuation funding application work plan).

XIII. PROGRAM EVALUATION

Policy: SEPs will conduct process and outcome evaluations of program services and conduct client satisfaction surveys at least once annually.

Procedures: Agencies will develop process and outcome evaluation criteria for program services, including client satisfaction surveys, to document progress in attaining the goals of the project as outlined in the plan approved by the State Health Commissioner.

A. SEPs will participate in the AIDS Institute's funded evaluations of its Syringe Access Initiatives.

B. SEPs will participate in AI's Quality Improvement Program.

XIV. CHANGES TO REGULARLY SCHEDULED SEP

Policy: Agencies may request to close syringe exchange programs on major national holidays (New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) for special situations and weather related emergency conditions.

Procedures: Agencies must submit requests to the Harm Reduction Unit to close its SEP on the major national holidays listed above or for special situations. Staff should call HRU when there are weather related emergency conditions.

- A. Written requests to close SEPs on major national holidays or special situations should include:
1. Reason(s) for wanting to close the SEP (e.g. cost of overtime for staff, underutilization of services on holidays, availability of syringes in pharmacies). For special situation, describe the problem (e.g. recent gunfire at location)
 2. Steps your agency will take to ensure participants are informed of holiday closings (e.g. verbal notification, posting signs, flyers, announcements in groups)
 3. Steps your agency will take to promote syringe access/availability while the SEP is closed (e.g. contingency contracting prior to the holiday, accessing ESAP info via website: www.nyhealth.gov, providing list of ESAP pharmacies, list of SEP sites that are open).
- B. Agencies need to call HRU regarding the closure of its SEP due to weather related emergency conditions.
1. Describe the weather related emergency condition (e.g. flooding – road impassable; power line down; significant snow/sleet).
 2. Estimate when the agency expects to be able to resume regular SEP operations.
 3. Provide daily update to HRU if SEP is not at its regular location because of continuing weather related emergency condition.

XV. DEVELOPING NEW EXCHANGE SITES

Policy: Agencies will use the AIDS Institute's SEP Expansion Protocols for authorization to establish new sites. Required information should be submitted to the AIDS Institute for review and approval.

Procedure: Agency staff will submit the required documents and information as indicated in AI's SEP Expansion Protocols.

A. New Sites. Prior approval from the AIDS Institute is required for establishment of new sites. Syringe Exchange programs which plan to open new sites must submit formal written requests to the AIDS Institute with the documents and information contained in AI's SEP Expansion Protocols. For sites which are located in Community Boards other than existing sites, information that is needed includes: 1) Address of the newly proposed site(s) and days/hours of operation; 2) Justification and impact statement for the new SEP location(s); assurances that the proposed SEP site is not situated in places where and when children are apt to be present (i.e. playgrounds, schools, day care or other facilities where children may congregate). 3) Programs must submit documentation of their previous and planned activities to interact with members of the community where an exchange site is planned in order to enlist support. If proposed sites are within the same community board as existing SEPs, agencies do not need to elicit community board approval. They are only required to inform the Harm Reduction Unit/AIDS Institute of new locations.

1. Proposed sites should be easily accessible to potential participants, but must not be located near schools, playgrounds, daycare facilities or other settings which would be inappropriate and which would potentially generate community opposition.
2. Representatives of the SEP should inform community residents and business people, community organizations, health and substance use treatment and other service providers, law enforcement officials and potential program participants about the proposed site.

B. Expanding or Changing Existing Sites. *Prior approval* from the AIDS Institute is required for expansion or changes in location of existing sites. The SEP must notify the AIDS Institute in writing of the location of the site and the proposed expansion/change in operations. Assurances must be provided that the site meets the **criteria** noted above regarding the presence of children (A and A1).

1. In order to coordinate services and prevent conflicts among programs or program participants, a list of hours and locations of currently operating SEPs will be distributed to all programs whenever there is a change to any SEP locations or hours. All programs are required to submit written requests for changes to the AIDS Institute, and inform other SEPs that serve the same geographic location or clientele.
2. Each site must be operated consistently at the same time and day of the week. Requests for changes to SEP hours/days of operation must be submitted in writing to the AIDS Institute as indicated in the SEP Protocol "Changes in Days/Hours of SEP Operations". Requests must include the current hours/days, proposed changes to hours/days, and justification for proposed changes.
3. Requests to establish a new site or to change an existing site in the same Community Board should include:
 - a. Proposed site location and hours of operation;

- b. Justification or rationale for proposed syringe exchange program within the targeted community, including availability of other syringe exchange services in the community;
- c. Assurances that new SEP location meets the criterion noted above regarding the presence of children (A-2);
- d. Issues regarding community concerns;
- e. Description of how services at the new site will be coordinated with other syringe exchange services in the community;
- f. Assurances that the SEP has adequate program resources (supplies, trained staff/peers/volunteers) to support the establishment of a new site or the expansion of an existing site;
- g. Process for disposal of infectious waste generated from the new site.

XVI. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Policy: Each syringe exchange program must have a Community Advisory Board (CAB) that is representative of the community and geographic areas the program serves.

Procedures: The following procedures will be used to establish a Community Advisory Board.

A. Formation of a Community Advisory Board

- 1a. Programs may establish a separate body to serve this function or they may utilize an existing advisory body provided that the necessary representation is maintained.
- 1b. A list of CAB members and a description of the boards' mission and functions must be furnished to the AIDS Institute.

B. Other Advisory Boards

- 1a. SEPs may establish a separate Users' Advisory Board made up of program participants and other substance users to provide input and guidance on program policies and operations.
- 1b. If unable to identify program participants who are willing to serve on the Community Advisory Board, programs can convene semi-annual or quarterly focus groups to elicit input from users and members of their social networks.

XVII. COMMUNITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT CONCERNS

Policy: Incidents involving syringe exchange programs, including community objections or concerns, law enforcement incidents, and potential legal action against programs, must be reported, addressed and documented by agency staff.

Procedures: Agency staff will adhere to the following process when addressing or reporting community or law enforcement concerns.

A. Reporting, addressing, and documenting community or law enforcement concerns

- 1a. Incidents related to the SEP, community or law enforcement must be immediately reported to the agency's executive management, verbally and writing. The AIDS Institute/Harm Reduction Unit must be notified as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours from the time of the occurrence using the written Incident Report Forms provided by AI. The purpose of these reports is to ensure documentation of incidents in order to identify and address potential problems.
- 1b. All subsequent action taken by the agency to address the community or law enforcement concern must be reported to the AIDS Institute.
- 1c. SEP staff have the option of contacting the AI/Harm Reduction Unit's Coordinator of Community Relations, Education and Training to develop and implement strategies to address the aforementioned incidents. Discussions will include possible interventions, SEP and/or AI/HRU's responsibilities for these interventions and timetables for follow-up discussions and further activities. Interventions may include meetings or presentations to Community Boards, community groups, civic associations, business development organizations and law enforcement (precinct commanders, training officers, police recruits and specialized police task forces/units).
- 1d. The AIDS Institute will respond to incident reports submitted by syringe exchange programs according to the protocol in Appendix A.

* * * *

APPENDIX A

SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

FLOW CHART

Incident Occurs between:

- SEP participant/police or other law enforcement (District Attorneys, Defender Services, Judges)
- SEP staff/police or law enforcement

Incident Report:

- Completed by SEP
- Faxed to HRU
- Optional: Call to HRU Coordinator of Community Relations - dependent on incident and outcome, and SEPs' assessment of situation.

HRU Coordinator of Community Relations (CCR):

- Reviews reports - shares with appropriate contract manager and HRU Director. If the CCR's need assessment indicates that additional action is needed, a call is made to the SEP. If nothing more is warranted, CCR has report entered into HRU's database.
- When further action is warranted, CCR will discuss strategies with ED or SEP Director. They will assess what actions should be taken (if any) and by whom.
- CCR/SEP staff will follow-up with each other to report on law enforcement activities.
- Depending on outcome of initial activity, additional outreach and education may be provided to other audiences (training sergeants, patrol officers at roll calls, prosecutors, defense attorneys). Again, there should be follow-up between CCR and SEP staff to report on activities and outcomes.
- SEP Staff: Provide feedback to CCR regarding status of issue (e.g., problem appears resolved, difficulties continue, suggestions for future actions).