

## Expanded Syringe Access Program Guidance (ESAP) for Providers & Consumers During COVID-19 State of Emergency

In the interest of public health, staff who deliver ESAP services should continue to provide or sell sterile syringes to consumers without a prescription. Shared and re-used syringes pose risks of COVID-19 transmission, skin and soft tissue infections and are potential vectors for new HIV and hepatitis infections.

This ESAP guidance contains information to give to consumers who rely on these programs. This supplements federal, state and local guidance on how to maintain the safety and health during this COVID-19 response.

Staff who deliver ESAP-related services, counselling or education to the public should follow COVID-19 guidance at all times:

- **Practice social distancing**, refrain from touching their faces, and avoid unnecessary touching of other surfaces.
- **Wash hands with soap and water frequently** for at least 20 seconds including: when engaging with consumers, after going to the bathroom, eating and handling food, blowing the nose, coughing and sneezing.
- **Disposable gloves** are an additional safety tool for reducing COVID-19 transmission when used properly.
- **Hand sanitizer dispensers** should be used and prominently visible for all to use.
- **Wipe down common areas and surfaces** with antiseptic products contain at least 60% alcohol as surfaces may harbor COVID-19.

### ESAP Reminders for Staff:

- **Review guidance** from [The Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and [the Solid Waste Association of North America \(SWANA\)](#) related to COVID-19 and waste management. The guidance outlines the standard procedures for the safe handling of residential waste, including from quarantined households. Currently, there is no evidence that suggests that the management of residential wastes or recyclables represents a danger to the general public.
- Continue to **wear personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate for handing sharps**. PPE includes items such as puncture resistant gloves, safety glasses, long pants and closed-toe shoes. Use tongs to pick up syringes, cleaning and sanitizing these tools, as needed.
- **There may be changes in ESAP hours, staffing, etc.** Posting changes in hours of operation is important. Encourage clients to call ahead before coming in for services.
- **Include the required [ESAP Insert \(#9359\)](#) with each syringe transaction.**
- **Access free educational ESAP publications** which are available for printing and ordering at the NYSDOH [ESAP -related materials](#) for promotion.
- Staff who **provide opioid overdose prevention services** are encouraged to review [COVID-19 Opioid Overdose Prevention Program Guidance](#) online.

### **ESAP Reminders for Consumers:**

In response to state and federal guidance to prevent transmission of COVID-19 infections, local hospitals or nursing home may not allow the public to dispose of used syringes, until further notice.

Consumers should use the following options:

1. If the site is unavailable, consumers **should try to identify an alternative disposal site**. Refer to online [Alternative Collection Site Directory \(PDF\)](#).
2. Consumers **who need to obtain sterile syringes** can locate a site using the [directory of ESAP providers in NYS](#) on the NYSDOH website. Some drug stores may be open but their pharmacy sections may be closed. Call before going to make sure it is open.
3. Refer consumers to Syringe Exchange Programs (SEPs). SEPs manage alternative disposal sites **where used syringes can be deposited and new, sterile syringes accessed**. Advise clients to call the program as days and hours are changing because of COVID-19 response before going to get or dispose of syringes. [A directory listing SEPs and hours of operation are online](#).
4. Educate consumers, **who cannot find an alternate place to dispose of used sharps**, how to safely dispose of used sharps by placing them in a heavy plastic container, such as a laundry detergent, bleach or soda bottle. If the container has used sharps, it should *NOT* be put with the recyclable plastics. In some jurisdictions, plastic containers filled with used sharps may be placed in household trash. Consumers should call their local health, sanitation, public works department or trash collector before disposing of used syringes and needles in the household trash.
5. **Give instructions on how to clean used syringes with bleach and water** to consumers who are unable to access sterile syringes. This harm reduction strategy may help to reduce the risk of HIV and other blood-borne diseases, including COVID-19. The required [ESAP Insert \(#9359\)](#) includes bleach and water cleaning instruction for distribution.
6. **Explain that exposed needles are dangerous**. If a puncture-resistant container is not available, consumers are encouraged to recap the needle after use. Inform them not to recap needles used by other people. If recapping is not possible, suggest that they pull out the syringe plunger, break off the point and put it in the barrel of the syringe, replace the plunger. The syringe is no longer a danger.

NYSDOH recognizes, appreciates and values that program staff continue to deliver ESAP services and work hard to maintain the health and safety of staff and the people they serve.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email us at [ESAP@health.ny.gov](mailto:ESAP@health.ny.gov)