

New York State Department of Health Guidelines for Hospital and Nursing Home Sharps Collection and Safe Disposal Programs

Introduction

Under New York State law, hospitals and nursing facilities are required to accept household sharps. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide background information and technical assistance to health care facilities licensed under Article 28 of the New York State Public Health Law regarding implementation of statutory requirements pertaining to mandated sharps collection programs.

Section 1389-dd (4) of the New York State (NYS) Public Health Law indicates that

Sharps, including needles, syringes and lancets, originating from a private residence, may be delivered for disposal to a general hospital...or a residential health care facility....Sharps, including needles, syringes and lancets returned pursuant to this section must be accepted by the hospital or residential health care facility on the condition that the needles, syringes and lancets have been deposited in an approved puncture proof container by the generator. The hospital or residential health care facility receiving such contained sharps must dispose of sharps in accordance with this section.

The intent of these provisions is that individuals, families and communities have convenient access to programs for safe and proper disposal of used hypodermic needles, syringes and lancets ("sharps") used outside of health care settings.

Safe disposal of sharps used outside of health care settings is important for many reasons. Research has documented that syringes remain infectious for prolonged periods. Safe disposal programs reduce sharing of syringes, reduce circulation time of syringes, reduce percentage of contaminated syringes in circulation, reduce risk of exposure/needle stick injuries and these programs need to be encouraged and supported. Improperly disposed syringes and other sharps are hazardous; promoting safe disposal is a public health issue in NYS and nationwide.

The Department of Health recognizes that the resources, circumstances and physical environments of individual health care facilities vary and that flexibility in complying with the above provisions is necessary. For these reasons, the Department has declined to adopt specific, universal requirements that would pertain to all facilities. This stance has resulted in some, but not all facilities, having household sharps programs that minimally fulfill basic expectations and therefore fail to meet the needs of their surrounding communities.

Rather than adopt regulations or invoke punitive enforcement actions, the Department seeks to encourage facilities to review and “renew” their household sharps programs, bearing in mind the overall goals for such programs. For maximum effectiveness, sharps collection and safe disposal programs should have several qualities. Specifically, they should be:

- ✓ Convenient, accessible and easy to use
- ✓ Promoted to the community
- ✓ Understood and supported by staff
- ✓ Safe and secure
- ✓ Monitored and Improved

To aid facilities in making sure that their programs fulfill the above requirements and goals, the Department has developed a checklist of basic elements, identified features of model programs and prepared templates for facilities to adapt to help fill the gaps in existing programs.

II. Basic Elements, Checklist and Features of Model Sharps Collection and Safe Disposal Programs

To assist facilities in fully complying with the intent of the above provisions, the following checklist reflects elements of sharps collection and safe disposal programs that should be in place at every hospital and nursing home licensed under Article 28 of the NYS Public Health Law. Features distinguishing model, or enhanced, programs follow the checklist for each element.

Elements:

I. Convenience, Access and Ease of Use

Checklist

- ✓ Days and hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- ✓ Specific location has been identified that is easily accessible for collection
- ✓ Signs and directions are available to direct community residents to the collection/disposal location
- ✓ System is in place for processing regulated medical waste that meets environmental health requirements

Features Distinguishing Model, or Enhanced, Programs

- ▶ Convenient days and hours of operation (i.e., hours of operation offer every weekday and weekend collection)
- ▶ Clear signage and directions to collection/disposal location
- ▶ Easily accessible location for collection/disposal (i.e., entry way, emergency room, lobby)
- ▶ Minimal, easy-to-follow requirements for packaging sharps disposed of by community residents (e.g., variety of packaging/containers)
- ▶ No requirements for providing self-identifying information
- ▶ Minimal steps for disposal (i.e., one stop, anonymous disposal with limited staff contact)
- ▶ Extended hours of operation (e.g., 7 days per week, including evening and weekend hours)
- ▶ Multiple locations, including off-site, for collection
- ▶ Community partnerships for off-site collection (e.g., hospital picks up sharps collected at off-site locations such as pharmacies or health and human service agencies that do not already have regulated medical waste)
- ▶ Availability of sharps containers free or for a nominal fee for outpatients and community residents (e.g., provided by health care facility, health care providers, pharmacies)
- ▶ Use of sharps collection drop box or "kiosk" in convenient monitored location (e.g., lobby, emergency room, outdoors) with no staff contact necessary for depositing used sharps

2. Community Information and Program Promotion

- ✓ Persons receiving inpatient or outpatient services from the facility who already do or who will use syringes, needles, lancets or other sharps are educated about the importance of safe disposal and are informed that they can return any used sharps to the facility for safe disposal.
- ✓ Community residents have been informed regarding availability of the program (e.g., program brochure, signage at facility location, news release to area media)

Features Distinguishing Model, or Enhanced, Programs

- ▶ Program brochure that provides definition of the program and identifies location and time of collection and disposal services
- ▶ Patient education materials distributed within the hospital (e.g., general public education area)
- ▶ Patient education materials convey welcoming message (e.g., encourage participation, concern regarding health and safety of community)
- ▶ Promotion to broader community (e.g., Penny Saver newspaper, health fairs, web site)
- ▶ Annual press release or other reminder
- ▶ Patient education materials distributed to relevant clinic areas (e.g., diabetes, infectious disease, anyone who may use needles)
- ▶ Patient education materials that is language-appropriate to the community population (e.g., Spanish)
- ▶ Patient education provided on safe use and disposal (e.g., a standard component of discharge planning)

3. Staff Awareness and Education

Checklist

- ✓ Program has been documented in facility policy and procedures manual
- ✓ Staff safety has been promoted (e.g., protective systems used by staff to prevent needlesticks) and staff wear protective gear, as necessary (e.g., gloves, gowns, masks)
- ✓ Staff has received information and training, as necessary

- ✓ Staff is proactive about providing information about the safe disposal and the facility's program for safe disposal to inpatients and outpatients.

Features Distinguishing Model, or Enhanced, Programs

- ▶ Orientation for all applicable staff (e.g., security, regulated medical waste, infection control, nursing, housekeeping, volunteers, reception/information operators)
- ▶ Annual in-service for all applicable staff
 - ▶ Handouts, videotapes
- ▶ Part of annual training (i.e., biohazards, regulated medical waste, infection control)
- ▶ Include in list for reception/information desk (e.g., check list of hours, requirements)
- ▶ Train greeters and volunteers
- ▶ Documentation of program in hospital policy and procedures manual
- ▶ Sensitivity training for all applicable staff (e.g., non-judgmental)
- ▶ Distribution of program promotion brochure with staff paychecks to assure all staff are aware of program and to share most important provider/consumer elements

4. Safety and Security

Checklist

- ✓ System is in place for security of collection and disposal location and equipment

Features Distinguishing Model, or Enhanced Programs

- ▶ Adoption of policies and procedures that clearly outline safety precautions (e.g. staff should not open sharps containers to remove individual sharps).
- ▶ Location of drop box or "kiosk" is monitored by appropriate hospital staff.

5. Monitoring and Improvement

Checklist

- ✓ Program is monitored by responsible staff and improvements are made to increase effectiveness in removing used sharps from the community as necessary.

Features Distinguishing Model, or Enhanced, Programs

- ▶ Collection of non-identifying data regarding volume or number of community sharps collected, usually estimated by weighing the container(s)
- ▶ Collection of community and staff feedback and implementation of community and staff suggestions for improving programs further

III. Considerations Regarding Personal Sharps Containers and Sharps Collection Drop Boxes or “Kiosks”

Sharps Containers - Commercially available, leak-proof, puncture resistant sharps containers are often recommended for use in containing used sharps to minimize risk of needlestick injury in the home and other outpatient settings. For some individuals, the cost of commercially available personal sharps containers is a barrier to access to these items. Use of other leak-proof, puncture resistant containers, such as bleach or laundry detergent bottles, is recommended. Insofar as possible, to maximize safe and proper disposal of used sharps, facilities are encouraged not to limit acceptance of sharps to those packaged only in commercially available personal sharps containers.

A misperception on the part of some facilities is that each individual's sharps must be labeled with the individual's name and address. While there is a labeling requirement that applies to regulated medical waste, sharps generated in the home are not defined as regulated medical waste until such time as they are aggregated with other household sharps. Only after the individuals' sharps are accepted by the facility do they become regulated medical waste. Subjecting individuals from the community to an unnecessary labeling requirement may deter individuals from safely disposing of their used sharps.

Sharps Collection Drop Boxes or “Kiosks” - Sharps collection drop boxes or “kiosks” may be used as part of a facility's sharps collection and safe disposal program. These collection units, described elsewhere in this packet, may be placed in a variety of locations. Use of a drop box or “kiosk” may appeal to some members of the community as the drop box or “kiosk” provides a means by which individuals can deposit sharps anonymously. A drop box or “kiosk” can also extend access to safe disposal by providing an option for days and hours when staffs are not available to accept used sharps. Use of a drop box or “kiosk” may also offer facilities certain advantages. For example, risks to staff associated with handling personal sharps containers (which are puncture resistant, not puncture proof) are avoided. There may be efficiencies associated with decreased need for staff time and attention taken away from other tasks to accept used sharps brought to the facility for safe disposal.



IV. Resources for Further Information

For additional information concerning NYSDOH requirements for Sharps Collection and Safe Disposal Programs at hospitals and nursing homes contact: **Division of Certification & Surveillance at 518-402-1003**

Other resources you may be interested in:

1. New York State Department of Health Guidelines for Health Care Facilities interested in becoming Expanded Syringe Access Program Providers (ESAP) go to: http://www.health.ny.gov/aids/harm_reduction/needles_syringes/esap/facguide.htm
2. New York State Department of Health Guidelines for Pharmacies Interested in Accepting Hypodermic Needles, Syringes and Other "Sharps" Used Outside of Care settings for Safe Disposal
http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/needles_syringes/esap/guidelines/pharmacies/index.htm
3. Application For Registration to Accept Home Generated Sharps for Safe Disposal
http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/needles_syringes/esap/guidelines/pharmacies/index.htm
4. New York State Directory of Community Sharps Collection Sites:
<http://nyhealth.gov/sharps-collection>

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HOUSEHOLD



SHARPS

d i s p o s a l p r o g r a m

What is the Household Sharps Disposal Program?

The program provides a convenient location for the safe disposal of used sharps. "Sharps" are needles, syringes and lancets. Everyone in the community is welcome to participate in this free program.

Why should I use the program?

When sharps are thrown away with household trash, there is a risk of injury and blood borne diseases, such as Hepatitis and HIV.

How should I dispose of sharps?

After each use, store your sharps in leak and puncture-proof containers, such as bleach or laundry detergent bottles, with a screw-on cap. When the container is 75% full, tape-over the screw-on cap and bring the container to:

(Hospital Name), (Site Location)
(Street Address)
(City, State, Zip Code)

Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

For more information ... call *(Hospital Name)* at *(Phone Number)*.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

(Name of Hospital) is pleased to partner with the following in the safe disposal and collection of sharps.

- ◆ *(Community Partner Name/Description of Service/Location/ Phone Number)*
- ◆ *(Community Partner Name/Description of Service/Location/ Phone Number)*
- ◆ *(Community Partner Name/Description of Service/Location/ Phone Number)*
- ◆ *(Community Partner Name/Description of Service/Location/ Phone Number)*

HOUSEHOLD



SHARPS

disposal program

A free community service program for the collection of used needles, syringes and lancets.

*(Hospital Name)
(Street Address)
(City, State, Zip Code)
(Phone Number)*

(Hospital Logo)



*(Hospital Name)
(Street Address)
(City, State, Zip Code)
(Phone Number)*

What is the Household Sharps Disposal Program?

The Household Sharps Disposal Program provides a convenient location for the safe disposal of used sharps.

"Sharps" are needles, syringes and lancets.

Everyone in the community is welcome to participate in this free program, including those who self-inject medications.

WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM?

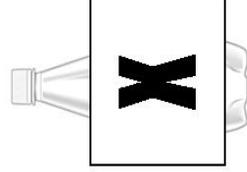
When sharps are thrown away with household trash, there is a risk of injury and blood borne diseases, such as Hepatitis and HIV, to sanitation workers.

HOW SHOULD I DISPOSE OF SHARPS?

After each use, store your sharps in leak and puncture-proof containers, such as bleach or laundry detergent bottles, with a screw-on cap. Make sure to keep your container in a safe place, away from children and pets.



Do not store sharps in items such as soda bottles or coffee cans.



WHAT DO I DO WHEN MY CONTAINER IS FULL?

When the container is 75% full, tape-over the screw-on cap and bring the container to:

(Hospital Name)

(Street Address)

(City, State, Zip Code)

(Site Location)

(Directions)

Monday through Friday:

8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday:

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

For more information ...
Call *(Hospital Name)* at
(Phone Number)



What to Include in News Releases and Public Notifications

- ▶ Definition of “sharps” (i.e., needles, syringes and lancets)
- ▶ Why proper sharps disposal is important (i.e., make sure sharps do not end up in playgrounds or parks, risk of injury and blood borne diseases)
- ▶ How to properly dispose of sharps
 - Leak, shatter and puncture-proof containers with screw-on cap (e.g., picture or drawing of a bleach or laundry detergent bottle)
 - Immediately put sharps in container after each use and keep in safe place away from children and pets
- ▶ How to dispose of sharps at the health care facility
 - Collection site with specific location within facility, address, telephone number and directions to location
 - Days and hours of operation
- ▶ Examples of the types of persons who would find the program valuable (e.g., persons who self-inject medications)
- ▶ Clearly state that everyone is encouraged to participate in the program
- ▶ Quote(s) from facility management to explain the reason for the program (i.e., minimizing the risks of exposure to infectious waste) and to express willingness to provide this type of service to the community
- ▶ Target and tailor news releases and public notifications to the appropriate audience (e.g., disease/health condition, racial/ethnic)
- ▶ Consider the use of newspapers, penny savers, radio, television (news, cable station community events), magazines, local health-related publications and local business publications

SAMPLE PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

30 Seconds:

The safe disposal of used sharps is a major concern to the community of (city name). Sharps are needles, syringes and lancets. To minimize the risk of injuries, Hepatitis and HIV as the result of improper disposal, (Hospital name) provides the community with a free, convenient site for the safe disposal of used sharps. (Hospital name) accepts used sharps from community residents (days) from (times). Used sharps should be placed in leak and puncture-proof containers, such as laundry detergent or bleach bottles with a screw-on cap. For more information on the safe disposal of used sharps, call (hospital name) at (phone number).

20 Seconds:

The safe disposal of used sharps is a major concern to the community of (city name). Sharps are needles, syringes and lancets. To minimize the risk of injuries, Hepatitis and HIV as a result of improper disposal, (Hospital name) accepts used sharps from community residents (days) from (times). For more information on the safe disposal of used sharps, call (hospital name) at (phone number).

10 Seconds:

(Hospital name) accepts used needles, syringes and lancets from community residents. Needles, syringes and lancets that are disposed of improperly in household trash create the risk of injuries, Hepatitis and HIV. For more information, call (hospital name) at (phone number).

SHARPS Disposal Program

(Hospital Name)'s Household Sharps Disposal Program is a free community service. Sharps (needles, syringes and lancets) thrown away in household trash creates the risk of injury and blood borne diseases for sanitation workers and community residents. Sharps should be placed in leak and puncture-proof containers (laundry detergent or bleach bottles) with a screw-on cap. Securely closed containers can be brought to the (Hospital Name), (Site Location) for disposal Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. or Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. For more information, call (Hospital Name) at (Phone Number).