

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b> Mayor and Members Board of Health	<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> CITY WIDE
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b> October 21, 2013	
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b> Update to Supporting Neighbourhoods in Managing Community Consequences of Addictions BOH12008(a) (City Wide)	
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b> Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC Medical Officer of Health Public Health Services Department	<b>PREPARED BY:</b> Dr Julie Emili (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2169  Linda Blake-Evans (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3286
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## Council Direction:

This information report provides an update to June 18, 2012 BOH12008 report "Supporting Neighbourhoods in Managing Community Consequences of Addictions". This report was approved to allow Public Health Services (PHS) to realign services within current budgets to address issues in the community related to addictions, thereby reducing harm to the community. This action plan aligns with the Corporate Priority Area of "Create Healthy Neighbourhoods".

## Information:

Three key areas for intervention were approved in June 2012:

1. Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Services social worker providing support and education re: addictions to shelter staff and neighbourhoods increasing their capacity to deal with the consequences of addictions;
2. Enhancing the pick up of discarded needles in the community; and
3. Realigning needle exchange service hours to meet high demand times including Saturday evenings.

**1. Addiction Issues in Shelters & Community:**

An additional 1.5 days per week of social worker time was provided through Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Services (ADGS) from October 2012 to September 2013. The intent of the extra time was to help build shelter staff skills, knowledge and capacity to better help clients with addictions. Activities included:

- Education on harm reduction was provided by an ADGS staff member to shelter managers and staff through meetings with Good Shepherd Men's and Women Shelters, Salvation Army Shelter and Mission Services Shelter. Shelter staff reported that it was helpful to call the ADGS staff member to request information on addiction services. Shelter staff were also reminded regularly of the drop-in addiction counselling hours that are available for homeless clients from the same ADGS staff member at Wesley Centre and Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre weekly.
- Staff report an increase in the number of inquiry calls from shelters about services and project a 37% increase to year end in clients seen during drop-in hours for counselling.
- Gave three presentations on Harm Reduction in the community to front-line workers (McMaster University, Core Collaborative Learning). A four-part harm reduction series has been developed and offered to front-line shelter and community agency staff in September which included training in street drugs, overdose, services and safer substance use. Sessions will be recorded by Core Collaborative Learning staff so that those who could not attend may participate in online learning.
- Developed information and resource booklets for shelter staff and needle syringe sites; as well as education materials about needle syringe supplies.
- Attended key community committee meetings (Hamilton Shelter Working Group, PHS Van Program) to provide consultation and advice.
- Met with shelter managers and City housing/shelter staff in August 2013 to discuss and evaluate project outcomes. At this meeting, Good Shepherd Men's Shelter manager Carmen Saliccioli reported that since their site has started offering clients small sharps containers on site through PHS, they have had fewer discarded needles found in the shelter's dorm and washrooms. This report is a big success as shelters were experiencing issues with discarded used needles. There was interest from Salvation Army's Shelter Manager to institute availability of client sharps containers and this will be followed up. Giving clients a private way to discard sharps instead of handing into a shelter staff member is helpful to prevent discarded needles in and around shelters.

- Shelter managers identified a need to post more information about overdose signs and symptoms. Overdose awareness posters were distributed to all shelter sites.

A Harm Reduction Network was initiated by PHS in 2012 with invitations to key community partners who provide front-line harm reduction services. One meeting has been held to date in Spring 2013 and another meeting is being scheduled for later in 2013.

The goals of the network are to:

1. Provide a forum for a constructive dialogue about harm reduction issues; and
2. Enhance the way in which service providers work together to improve the continuum of harm reduction services available in our community

Future Plans:

- The realignment of budget to enhance the ADGS staff member's increased hours ended in September 2013. There are no plans to continue to enhance staff hours as the goal of capacity building shelter staff skills were met and there was not an identified need for this model to continue from the shelter managers.
- Distribution of overdose prevention kits is a high priority of the MOHLTC. Public health units are expected to begin distribution in the fall of 2013. The Harm Reduction Network provides an avenue to ensure distribution in the community and will continue to look at ways to better provide services for individuals dealing with addictions and for ways to make our community safer.

## **2. Needles in the Community:**

Historically, Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) have been called out to pick up used needles in the community. Community members and businesses were frustrated with finding discarded needles with few resources to assist them. As per the June 2012 Board of Health report, a new "Community Points" needle pick up program has been developed in partnership with The AIDS Network. Since June 2012, the Community Points program has been under development and has responded to needle complaints on private property during business hours. Working within current operational constraints, response time is scheduled each morning, Monday to Friday from 9 am to 11 am. In addition to responding to complaint calls, staff also check and pick up used needles from areas of the City known to have reports of discarded needles (i.e. Beasley Park, community garden). The mobile Van will pick up containers of used needles during their evening shifts (Monday to Saturday 8 pm to midnight), but it is not safe for Van staff to search for used needles on the ground during the evening when there is low lighting.

With proper training, anyone can safely pick up a used needle. During their rounds, Community Points staff are able to help teach the public about safe needle pick up. Some of the calls to PHS for needle pick up have been from other City departments. It is not an efficient use of time to send staff out to a site where other City staff are already working or if needle is located within their work assignment (i.e. roads, sidewalks, alleyways). In order to improve efficiencies and to have more City staff trained to pick up used needles, the PHS manager for Health Hazards along with Health, Safety and Wellness staff advocated for a needle safety training program for Public Works staff. As a result, other City staff have been trained and are retrieving used needles on City property during daytime business hours. A call out algorithm for the Customer Contact Centre has been developed so that members of the public may now call 546-CITY to report a found needle and ask for assistance (Appendix A). Operationally there are not adequate resources in City departments to physically respond to calls for needle pick up after hours or on weekends. Best efforts will be made to respond to needle pick up calls within the next business day. This process is effective as of this report date.

**Community Points Achievements:**

June 2012 to December 2012:

Program planning and staff recruitment time was needed June to December 2012. PHS staff (Van program/health inspectors) responded to 61 needle complaints.

January 2, 2013 to August 31, 2013:

Community Points regularly checked various parks, alleys and areas with a history of discarded needles and finding low numbers of needles. Staff also responded to 15 needle complaint calls during day time hours. Between regular checks and call outs, a total of 1,416 needles were retrieved; as well as other garbage, used condoms and safe injection equipment (tourniquets, filters, spoons).

PHIs also responded to 26 complaints after hours. As the Community Points program became operational, PHIs have been referring after hour calls to the next working day for a response where appropriate.

PHS is currently working with CN Rail to respond to discarded needles under railway bridges during Community Points hours.

Comments from members of the public who were referred to Community Points service:

*"Absolutely excellent, fast service."* - Patricia, condo board member, Ward 2

*"Awesome. Very fast, very thorough. A really good service."* – Ashley, A&W manager, Ward 3

*"Pretty good. They came and disposed of everything. I had never heard of the service before then, but I'd call again."* – Paul, apartment resident, Ward 3

Future Plans:

Public Health will continue to support the enhanced needle pick up service in future. Community Points will be doing more community engagement and advertising of the program to increase awareness within the community, including to each council members' administrative staff.

**3. Weekend Needle Exchange Hours:**

The Van program began offering Saturday evening services from 8 pm to 12 midnight since June 30, 2012 in partnership with The AIDS Network. An increase of 5 hours per week for Saturday evening Van shifts was funded from existing budget. Van clients were asked for their feedback whether they were satisfied with the Saturday evening hours.

Feedback from Van clients included:

*"Saturdays are fantastic! I love having you around, it makes it easier to be safe and get clean supplies."*

*"It's good you're around tonight. I am out of supplies and would have rinsed out what I have."*

*"I was putting off seeing you because of work, so it's really good you're around tonight."*

**Saturday Evening Mobile Van Stats**

	<b>Used Needles Collected</b>	<b>New Needles Distributed</b>	<b># of Client Contacts Made</b>
June 30 – Dec 31/12	18,574	21,489	261
January 2, 2013 to August 31, 2013	28,614	28,892	251

Future Plans:

PHS will continue to offer this service to the community; as it is valued by clients and improves the distribution of clean injection supplies to prevent blood borne infections.

**Summary:**

PHS has listened to concerns identified in the community and has implemented a plan to support the management of consequences from addictions and to prevent harm to the community. It is important to recognize and balance the public's need for safe and enjoyable spaces with PHS' harm reduction program mandate and needs of clients with addictions.

## Appendix 1

October 2013

### **Proposed New Process for Handling Sharps Calls** **City Contact Centre (CCC)**

#### ***Daytime instructions for CCC staff regarding how to handle reports of sharps:***

Questions the CCC agent should ask:

1. Ask for caller's name and phone number
2. Ask for detailed location and quantity of needles
3. Are you sure they are needles?
4. When did you find them?
5. Have the needles been moved? If so, where are they and are they accessible?
6. Are the needles on City-owned or private property?
7. Is the caller willing to pick up the needle(s) if instructed how to do so safely? If yes, see instructions below.
8. If caller is not willing to handle needle, advise that there will be a **response within 1 business day**. If the caller identifies that there is a high risk to the public i.e. needle is located where children are playing, CCC staff will relay this information to appropriate department below.

#### **REGULAR BUSINESS DAY DISPATCH INSTRUCTIONS:**

If the sharps are reported to be on **City-owned property**, CCC staff to contact:

Roads and Maintenance Section – CCC enter into Hansen and contact appropriate Roads District (ie. North, East or West)

Alleys: Waste Collection Section – CCC enter into Hansen and contact Waste Collection Contact Centre at Ext 7494

Parks, Cemeteries and Beaches: Parks & Cemeteries (Public Works)

City Facilities: Facilities Management (Public Works)

City Recreation Centres: Recreation Operations (Public Works)

Municipal Parking Lots: Parking & By-law Services (Planning)

If the sharps are reported to be on **Private property** (eg. business, home, school playground), CCC staff to contact:

Sexual Health & Harm Reduction Program x3541

Monday to Friday 0830 am – 4:30 pm

Inform caller that needle pick up hours are currently between 9 am to 11 am and call may be responded to during next business day if call received after 11 am.

### **AFTER HOURS, WEEKEND & HOLIDAY DISPATCH INSTRUCTIONS:**

If the sharps are reported to be on **City-owned property:**

Call is logged and referred to appropriate city department for response during the next business day.

If the sharps are reported to be on **Private property:**

Call is referred to Public Health Services for response during the next business day.

Contact: Sexual Health & Harm Reduction Program x3541

Note: If caller voices concern about imminent risk to the public, call may be referred to on call public health inspector who will assess risk and discuss response plan with PHS manager on call.

## **Instructions to Safely Pick Up and Dispose of a Found Needle**

Children must be told never to touch a discarded needle, but to show an adult where it is. Adults can safely pick up and dispose of a found needle by following the steps below.

### **You will need:**

- Pliers or cooking/BBQ tongs
- Hard sided, non-breakable container with a lid (not glass) – like an empty bleach, detergent or kitty litter container
- Rubber or thick gloves if there is visible blood on the syringe.
- Closed toe shoes, not sandals

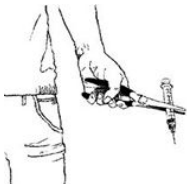
### **Steps:**



Take the pliers or tongs and container to where the needle is.

Place the container on a stable surface.

Use the pliers/tongs to carefully pick up the needle.



Hold the needle tip away from you.

Be careful not to prick yourself with the needle.



Carefully put the needle into the container, needle end first.

Close the container tightly.

**Do not** dispose of needles in your curbside garbage or Blue Box.

Wash your hands.

### Disposal Options:

1. Take the container to your local household hazardous waste site (no charge):  
27 Olympic Drive, Dundas  
37 Kilbride Road, Hamilton mountain  
460 Kenora Avenue, east Hamilton
2. Call Public Health Harm Reduction Program for pick up within 1 business day.  
Monday to Friday 08:30 am - 4:30 pm: Call 905-546-3541  
Monday to Saturday 8 pm to midnight: Call Needle Exchange Van 905-317-9966  
(note that Van staff do not clean up loose needles from 8 pm to midnight)
3. You may drop off the container at these locations during business hours,  
Monday to Friday (exceptions noted below).

Sites Accepting Used Needles	
Aboriginal Health Centre	678 Main Street East Hamilton, ON
Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Services	21 Hunter Street East 3rd Floor Hamilton, ON
Community Dental Bus	Call 905 546-City (2489) for location of the bus
Dundas Sexual Health Clinic	2 King St. West, 2nd floor Dundas Tuesdays only 11:30 am - 4:00 pm
East End (Stoney Creek) Sexual Health Clinic	247 Centennial Pkwy N, Unit 8 at Barton and Centennial Mondays only: 12:30 - 4 pm Thursdays only: 3 - 6pm
Elizabeth Fry Society (women only)	85 Holton Ave. South Hamilton, ON



Sites Accepting Used Needles	
Hamilton AIDS Network	140 King Street East, lower level Hamilton, ON
Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre	71 Rebecca Street Hamilton, ON
Mountain Sexual Health Clinic	1447 Upper Ottawa St. - Unit #8 Mondays only: 3 - 6 pm Wednesdays only: 12:30 - 4 pm
Waterdown Sexual Health Clinic	315 Dundas St. East, 2nd floor, Waterdown (between Main St. and Mill St. by the Theatre) Wednesdays only: 3 - 6 pm
Wesley Centre	195 Ferguson Avenue North Hamilton, ON

#### **FAQ:**

##### **Can I get HIV from used needle I found on the ground?**

From an accidental poke? Very unlikely. This is because HIV dies in open-air very quickly – within a few moments.

If there was HIV on the tip of the needle, and it got poked through your skin and into your bloodstream, it's probably already dead and unable to infect you.

From re-using the needle to inject yourself? Yes. If you were to pick up the needle and use it, then you could be at high risk for HIV. That's because if there is any HIV inside the barrel of the needle, then it could still be alive because it's protected from the air.

Never use abandoned needles or needles that might have been used by someone else before you. Only use new ones that you've gotten from a pharmacy or needle exchange.

##### **What do I do if I do get accidentally poked by an abandoned needle?**

Don't panic. Chances are, you are going to be just fine.

Don't squeeze the area of the poke, or try to "suck out the poison." This won't help, and might actually end up forcing any germs/infections further into your blood.

If it bleeds, let it bleed. It's your body's way of flushing out the wound.

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water, dry, and put a band-aid on the site of the poke.

Try to get to a hospital emergency room as soon as possible – preferably within the first 7 hours afterward. This will allow the healthcare team to administer the proper shots and medications to ward off skin infections, hepatitis viruses, tetanus, etc

Depending on the situation, they may also offer you some medications to help guard against any live HIV that might have been in the needle.

Keep in touch with your health care provider about how you are feeling in the days/weeks afterward.

Refer caller to Sexual Health Information Line 905-528-5894, Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm to speak to a public health nurse for more information about needle stick injuries.