

Harm Reduction

Syringe Exchange Program

SIX THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT MERCER COUNTY'S HARM REDUCTION SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM (HRSEP)

1. Reflects the Health Department's duty to stop the spread of infectious diseases, as required by state law.
2. Is a highly effective public health intervention that stops the spread of hepatitis B, C and HIV.
3. Provides access to health care, including counseling, testing and treatment.
4. Increases the likelihood of entering treatment for substance use disorder.
5. Helps remove dirty needles from public spaces, thus reducing the public's risk of accidental needlesticks.
6. Is an important component of Mercer County's overall response to the heroin epidemic.

How Will the Program Operate?

The Mercer County Health Department's HRSEP has been modeled after successful programs in Kentucky and according to guidance provided by the Kentucky Department for Public Health as well as by Senate Bill 192 as enacted by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2015.

- The program is open to anyone who uses injection drugs.
- Exchange of syringes and rapid HIV testing will be provided anonymously. Other services like repeat HIV testing, testing for Hep C, STD's and Pregnancy as well as immunizations must be done confidentially.

- Syringes and anonymous HIV testing will be provided free of charge.



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Clinical services beyond the exchange of syringes and the rapid HIV test may be billed per regular sliding scale fee or to a third party if participant is enrolled. No participant will be turned away for inability to pay.

- All participants are re-

quired to agree to a list of Participants Rights and Responsibilities. Items covered by this list include safe disposal of contaminated equipment, and refraining from drug use on Health Department property. Violations can result in dismissal from the program.

- Public Health Nurses, with training in blood-borne diseases, STD's etc, will provide Anonymous Services and Confidential Services according to protocols approved by the Kentucky Department for Public Health.

The Facts

Research about syringe exchange programs has found these programs:

- Do NOT encourage individuals to begin using drugs.

- Do NOT increase drug use among existing users.
- Do NOT increase crime in neighborhoods in which they operate.

- DO reduce the spread of blood-borne diseases like HIV, Hepatitis B and C etc.
- DO help people get on the path to drug treatment.



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The ASK Foundation
Ida Roberts, Founder and CEO
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Bluegrass Prevention Center
Michelle Ellis, Prevention Specialist
859-225-3296 ext 660

How Will the Health Department Evaluate Program Effectiveness?

As with any new program, the Mercer County Health Department will closely evaluate the HRSEP to insure that the program is meeting goals as well as to drive program improvements. Data will be shared with the Mercer County Board of Health, the Mercer Agency for Substance Abuse Policy (ASAP), as well as local and county governments. Data to be tracked:

- Number of unduplicated participants
- Zip code of participants
- Birth year of participants
- Gender of participants
- Frequency of injected drug use
- Number of needles received and issued
- Number of anonymous HIV tests given and rate of positivity
- Number of confidential tests for STD's, repeat HIV tests, Hep C tests and pregnancy tests as well as rates of positivity for each Number and types of vaccines given
- Number of participants entering treatment for substance abuse disorders



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