

Harm Reduction and Syringe Exchange Programs in the City and County of Los Angeles

Stephen David Simon, JD

City of Los Angeles, AIDS Coordinator's Office

Anna Long, PhD, MPH

County of Los Angeles, Department of Public Health

Ricky Bluthenthal, PhD

California State University-Dominguez Hills



Overview

- **Harm Reduction programs follow a set of strategies that reduce the negative consequences of drug use.**
- **Activities in LA:**
 - **Syringe Exchange Program (SEP)**
 - **Secondary Syringe Exchange (SSE)**
 - **Pharmacy Syringe Sales**
 - **NARCAN Availability**

Why Syringe Exchange?

- **SEPs allow injection drug users to trade used syringes, which are a source of HIV and Hepatitis infection, for clean syringes**
- **The City and County have a vested interest in the health and safety of ALL its residents**

Why Syringe Exchange?

continued

- **Effective at reducing HIV risk**
- **Does not increase drug use**
- **Does not increase crime or bring additional drug users to neighborhoods**
- **Takes contaminated syringes off of the streets**
- **Cost effective**

History of Syringe Exchange in Los Angeles

- **Early 1990s**

- **Started by a group of AIDS Activists, drug users and artists from the ACT UP movement**
- **Clashes with law enforcement and public officials**
- **Clean Needles Now starts program to serve Hollywood, Pico Union/MacArthur Park.**

History of Syringe Exchange in Los Angeles continued

- **Mid 1990s**

- SEPs formally begin working with law enforcement, City AIDS Coordinator's Office and other public officials.
- Tarzana Treatment Centers starts program to serve San Fernando Valley.
- Minority AIDS Project starts program to serve South Los Angeles.
- Bienestar Human Services starts program to serve North and East Los Angeles.

History of Syringe Exchange in Los Angeles continued

- **Late 1990s**

- Homeless Healthcare Los Angeles starts program to serve Downtown Los Angeles.
- Asian American Drug Abuse Program starts program to serve Central/South Los Angeles.
- Common Ground, in collaboration with CNN starts program to serve Venice.

City of Los Angeles

- **Program Approved in 1994**
 - Declaration of Local Health Emergency (1994)
 - LAPD Policy on Syringe Exchange (1994)
 - Renewed Declaration of Emergency (2000)
 - AB 136 (Mazzoni)
 - End Repeated Declaration Requirement (2004)
 - AB 2871 (Berg)
- **Historically Targeted Areas**
 - Downtown/Skid Row, Venice, Hollywood, San Fernando Valley, South Los Angeles

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

NOTICE

July 8, 2005

3.3.1

TO: All Department Employees

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Since 1994, the Department has worked in partnership with the residential and business communities, non-profit agencies, and social service organizations of the City to assist in the fight against Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis C, by establishing the Syringe Exchange Program.

In 2002-03, the City-sponsored Syringe Exchange Program removed nearly one million used, potentially lethal, syringes from the streets of Los Angeles. A study conducted by the United States Surgeon General showed that syringe exchange programs are an effective public health intervention tactic that reduces the transmission of AIDS, HIV and Hepatitis C, and that they do not encourage the use of illegal drugs. In addition, several studies have concluded there is little evidence to support an increase in drug-related crime as a result of syringe exchange programs.

The Mayor has declared a Local Public Health Emergency regarding the AIDS/HIV epidemic and endorsed the establishment of a clean syringe exchange program in the City. This Notice reaffirms the Department's commitment to reduce the spread of AIDS, HIV and Hepatitis C, and reminds all Department personnel of the existing procedures regarding the Syringe Exchange Program in the City.

PROCEDURE:

- I. **SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM – GENERAL PROVISIONS.** The Syringe Exchange Program in the City of Los Angeles has been operating for over a decade under the sanction of the City Council. The Syringe Exchange Program is designed to allow intravenous drug users to trade used syringes, which are a major source of HIV infection, for clean syringes. Participants in the City sponsored Syringe Exchange Program must be at least 18 years of age or older and must possess a valid syringe exchange card bearing their participant code number (see attachment 1). Syringe exchange sites are located throughout the City (see attachment 2 and 3) and are monitored by the City AIDS Coordinator's Office.
- II. **OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES.** Officers who encounter participants of the Syringe Exchange Program at a designated Syringe Exchange Program location shall generally adhere to the following guidelines:

City of Los Angeles Contractors

- **Asian American Drug Abuse Program**
- **Bienestar Human Services**
- **Clean Needles Now**
- **Common Ground**
- **Homeless Health Care Los Angeles**
- **Tarzana Treatment Centers**

City of Los Angeles Needle Exchange Sites

DAY	Address/Location	Provider	Community	Time
Saturday	905 Venice Blvd.	Common Ground	Venice	11:00 am – 2:00 pm
Sunday	Santa Monica & Sycamore	CNN	Hollywood	4:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Monday	627 San Julian St – Downtown 1926 Beverly Bl. (BAART Methadone Clinic) 117 E Harry Bridges & Avalon (@ The Clinic) 512 E. Fourth St. ***2012 Lincoln Blvd. 11700 Block of Borden (Under 118 Freeway Overpass) Arroyo Glen & Avenue 64 7500 Block of Valjean (Between Sherman Way & Saticoy)	CNN HHCLA Bienestar HHCLA Common Ground TTC Bienestar TTC	Los Angeles Los Angeles Wilmington Los Angeles Santa Monica Pacoima Highland Park Van Nuys	9:00 am – 12:00 pm 9:00 am – 12:00 pm 10:00 am – 11:30 am 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm 4:30 pm – 7:00 pm
Tuesday	32 nd & Broadway 512 E Fourth St Santa Monica & Sycamore ***2012 Lincoln Blvd. 130 Manchester 905 Venice Blvd.	AADAP HHCLA CNN Common Ground Bienestar Common Ground	South Los Angeles Los Angeles Hollywood Santa Monica Los Angeles Venice	7:00 am – 10:00 am 8:30 am – 4:00 pm 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Wednesday	119 th & Avalon 512 E Fourth St 8741 Laurel Canyon Bl (off of Roscoe Bl. Between Peoria St & Wicks St) 14515 Hamlin St. Suite 100 (off Van Nuys & Victory) Alley between Fickett & Mathews (South of Chavez) 604 Rose Ave. (Ask for Common Ground at Security Desk) Wilshire & Burlington	AADAP HHCLA TTC TTC Bienestar Common Ground CNN	South Los Angeles Los Angeles Sun Valley Van Nuys Boyle Heights Venice Pico Union	7:30 am – 10:30 am 8:30 am – 4:00 pm 9:30 am – 11:00 am 12:30 pm – 3:00 pm 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Thursday	512 E Fourth St ***2012 Lincoln Blvd. 11700 Block of Borden (Under 118 freeway Overpass) Alhambra & Johnston St. (Under Bridge) Sycamore & Santa Monica Bl	HHCLA Common Ground TTC Bienestar CNN	Los Angeles Santa Monica Pacoima Lincoln Heights Hollywood	8:30 am – 4:00 pm 1:00 pm – 7:00 pm 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm 6:30 pm – 10:00 pm
Friday	512 E. Fourth St. 627 San Julian St – Downtown Alley between Fickett & Mathews (South of Chavez)	HHCLA CNN Bienestar	Los Angeles Los Angeles Boyle Heights	8:30 am – 4:00 pm 9:00 am – 12:00 pm 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Information is subject to change without notification. Toll Free Schedule Line: 888-LANEX-85 Please call to verify:
TTC 818-342-5897; MAP 323-936-4949 ext 122; CNN 323-857-5366; AADAP 323-294-4932; HHCLA 213-342-3114;
Bienestar 323-752-3100; Common Ground 888-554-5459

***City of Los Angeles funds limited to City of Los Angeles residents

This Harm Reduction Program is supported by the City of Los Angeles AIDS Coordinator's Office
201 N. Figueroa St., Suite 100, Los Angeles, CA. 90012

Phone: 213-202-2750 TTY: 213-202-2755 FAX: 213-202-2715 WEBSITE: www.lacityaids.org

Revised: 08/31/09

City of Los Angeles Continued

- **Days and Hours of Operation**
 - Sunday – Saturday
 - Ranging From 6:30 am to 10:00 pm
- **Referrals**
- **Peripheral Services and Training**

Los Angeles County

- **Program Approved in 2000**

- Funding approved in 2005
- Implemented in 2007

- **Target Areas**

- Antelope Valley, East Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, South Bay, and South Los Angeles

Los Angeles County Continued

- **Certified Sites**

- 3 Years or More Providing SEP in LA
- Target Underserved Areas in County that Don't Have SEP

- **Modalities**

- Street
- Clinic
- Storefront

Los Angeles County Providers

- **Asian American Drug Abuse Program**
- **Bienestar Human Services**
- **Clean Needles Now**
- **Common Ground**
- **Tarzana Treatment Centers**

Demographic characteristics of SEP users (n=~15,000)

Characteristic	Percent	Characteristic	Percent
Gender		Age	
Male	74%	<30	19%
Female	25%	30-39	22%
Transgendered	1%	40-49	29%
		50 or more	30%
Race		Drug last injected	
White	46%	Heroin	75%
Hispanic	31%	Speed	20%
Black	19%	Cocaine	2%
A/PI	2%	Speedball	1%
Native Am	1%	Prescription drug	1%
Other	1%	Other	1%
Homeless		Secondary exchanger	
Yes	40%	Yes	19%

Selected utilization patterns of SEP clients

Characteristics	Percent	Characteristics	Percent
SEP		Visits	
AADAP	8%	1	65%
Bienestar	12%	2	11%
CNN	34%	3	5%
Common Ground	8%	4	3%
HHCLA	32%	5	3%
Tarzana	6%	6 or more	13%
Referred by		Syringe disposal	
Friend	61%	SEP	83%
Acquaintance	11%	Trash	30%
Other agency	10%	Toilet	2%
Walk-up	11%	Police	8%
Internet	6%	Gave away	12%

Syringes collected and distributed by year at both city and county SEPs

	07/08 ~24,000 encounters	08/09 ~29,000 encounters
Syringes collected	876,291	1,096,220
Mean (S.D.)	36.40 (79.38)	37.46 (71.53)
Median	14	13
Syringes distributed	998,254	1,219,570
Mean (S.D)	41.46 (82.44)	41.67 (68.87)
Median	20	20
Syringes collected from SEP	835,615	1,056,558
Mean (S.D)	34.76 (75.91)	36.14 (68.92)
Median	12	11
Syringes collected from Pharmacy	6,993	11,759
Mean (S.D.)	0.29 (5.47)	0.41 (2.07)
Median	0	0

S.D. = standard deviation

Supplies, services and referrals provided by year

	07/08 ~24,000 encounters	08/09 ~29,000 encounters
Items		
Condoms	9,809	9,780
Cotton	22,158	26,681
Alcohol Wipes	22,464	26,822
Ties	17,180	18,601
Food	2,862	3,094
Services		
Abscess care	6,343	7,107
Safer injection counseling	7,128	7,653
HIV testing	1,367	1,200
Referrals		
Abscess care	2,111	2,692
HIV testing	1,665	3,229
Safer injection counseling	2,220	3,180

Barriers and Challenges

- **Policy Restrictions**
- **Local Businesses**
- **Elected Officials**
- **Data Collection and Processing**
- **Law Enforcement**
 - Raids, Walk-throughs and the “Safer City Initiative”

Successes

- **More than 1 Million Syringes removed from the streets most years**
- **Increased City/County Collaboration**
- **Improved relationship with police**
- **Community Planning**
 - Harm Reduction Collaborative
 - PPC and Commission
- **City Council and Board of Supervisors Support**

Future Directions

- **Law Enforcement Training**
- **Expand collaboration between City, County and State in developing sites and services**
- **Policy Development and Community Education**
- **Better Integration of Supportive Services**

Questions