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SAPC INFORMATION NOTICE 22-09

May 6, 2022

TO: Los Angeles County Substance Use Disorder
SAPC – All Services Providers

FROM: Gary Tsai, M.D., Division Director
Substance Abuse Prevention and Control *GT*

**SUBJECT: HARM REDUCTION SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAM
CERTIFICATION**

Background

The County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health, Division of Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (DPH-SAPC) is issuing Information Notice 22-09 to update its Harm Reduction Syringe Services Program (SSP) certification process.

DPH-SAPC began certifying organizations offering harm reduction syringe services in 2005. The availability of harm reduction SSPs throughout Los Angeles County for people who use drugs (PWUD) is supported by the Board of Supervisors. DPH-SAPC certifies harm reduction SSPs to protect the health and wellness of individuals in the County by preventing overdoses, preventing infections and other medical complications associated with drug use, and by connecting PWUD to necessary health and social services.

Purpose

DPH-SAPC’s harm reduction SSP certification authorizes organizations to operate harm reduction syringe services in Los Angeles County in locations specified in their application, using delivery models including but not limited to fixed, mobile, and on-foot

outreach pursuant to Health & Safety Code (HSC) §121349.3 or Business & Professional Code (BPC) Section 4145.

The purpose of this document is to provide the following:

- Minimum requirements for Los Angeles County harm reduction SSPs;
- Information related to state legal requirements associated with harm reduction SSP operations; and
- Application process and criteria for DPH-SAPC harm reduction SSP certification.

Certification and Recertification Effective Period

DPH-SAPC's harm reduction SSP certification is effective for 5 years from the date of issue. Certification renewal is required every 5 years and programs can be recertified within the 6 months prior to the expiration of their SSP certification.

Eligibility Criteria

Prospective SSP applicant agencies must demonstrate a commitment to harm reduction strategies for PWUD by attesting to their ability to offer the following services:

- Provision of sterile needles and syringes, and other drug preparation equipment;
- Safe recovery and disposal of used syringes and sharps waste;
- Education and counseling to reduce sexual, injection and overdose risks;
- Provision of overdose reversal medications (e.g., naloxone) to reverse opioid overdose;
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and viral hepatitis prevention education services;
- Referrals to other medical and behavioral treatment services including but not limited to:
 - HIV, viral hepatitis, sexually transmitted infections (STI), sexually transmitted diseases (STD), and tuberculosis (TB) prevention, testing, treatment, and associated care services;
 - Substance use disorder treatment, including medications for addiction treatment (MAT); and
 - Medical care, mental health services, and other supportive services.

The SSP applicant agencies must also attest to the following:

- Compliance with all applicable state laws and regulations;
- Commitment to participate in an ongoing process involving services recipients' input into program operations; and
- Commitment to participate in meetings designated by DPH-SAPC.

Required Minimum Services

The following SSP services, at a minimum, must be provided to participants by Los Angeles County certified SSPs:

1. Syringe distribution services;
2. Naloxone training and distribution services;
3. HIV and viral hepatitis prevention education services; and
4. Safe recovery and disposal of used syringes and sharps waste.

Required Documents to obtain SSP Certification

Prospective SSP applicant agencies seeking certification are required to submit the following:

- Completed application (see <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/sapc/bulletins/START-ODS/22-09/SAPCIN22-09SSP-Certification-Application-distributed.pdf>)
- SSP Policies and Procedures (see policies and procedures)

Required Key Materials

Each certified SSP must at a minimum offer service recipients the following materials based on individual need:

1. Sterile needles and syringes;
2. A procedure for sharps disposal, which includes personal sharps containers;
3. Harm reduction supplies including, but not limited to, safer injection supplies;
4. Doses of naloxone; and
5. Condoms and other safe sex supplies.

Required Core Services

Each certified program must at a minimum provide the following services:

1. Needs-based sterile needles/syringe, personal sharps container, and other harm reduction supply dispensing;
2. Used syringe collection and disposal;
3. Relevant information and education, including but not limited to:
 - a. Overdose prevention and response;
 - b. Safer drug use principles and techniques;
 - c. Proper sharps disposal and prevention of needle-stick injuries; and
 - d. Condoms and other safe sex supplies.
4. Direct provision or referrals to:
 - a. Substance use disorder treatment services;
 - b. MAT (Medication for Addiction Treatment) services;
 - c. Screening for HIV, hepatitis C virus (HCV), STI, and STD;
 - d. HIV and HCV care and treatment;
 - e. Hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccination;
 - f. Mental health and/or other medical services; and
 - g. Housing services.

Required Policies and Procedures

Required policies and procedures are as follows:

1. Needs-based sterile syringe dispensing policies and procedures;
2. Used syringe collection and sharps waste disposal policies and procedures must include:
 - a. Encouragement for program participants to return used syringes to the program and/or to appropriately dispose of used syringes; and
 - b. Sharps waste collection to minimize direct handling by program paid and unpaid staff, volunteers and participants.
3. Needle stick prevention policies and procedures;
4. Needle stick injury response policies and procedures;
5. Participant confidentiality policy and procedures (compliance with [Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 2: Confidentiality of Substance Use Disorder Patient Records \(42 CFR, Part 2\)](#) and with the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act \(HIPAA\)](#)); and
6. Response protocol for staff emergencies.

Required Plans

Each certified SSP must have the following plans on file:

1. Core Services Delivery Plan describes the level and services provided. Plan components should at a minimum describe:
 - a. Methodology and process for tracking direct provision or referrals for services (e.g., HIV/HCV testing, screening, MAT, wound care, etc.);
 - b. Methodology and process for tracking linkages to external services;
 - c. Harm reduction supply distribution;
 - d. Provision of education and supplies for safer sex practices;
 - e. Participant confidentiality protocols; and
 - f. Hours of operation, mobile and/or fixed locations, and additional services offered.
2. Sterile Syringe Dispensing Plan describes the methodology and process for providing new sterile syringes to PWUD based on the needs of the service recipient and tracking the number of sterile syringes dispensed.
3. Used Syringe Collection and Sharps Waste Disposal Plan is to maximize return of used syringes and minimize the risk of a needlestick injury and must include the following components:
 - a. Methodology and process for tracking and reporting number of used syringes returned;
 - b. Training for staff and participants regarding sharps waste disposal consistent with Health and Safety Code § 18286; and
 - c. Protocol for safe and responsible sharps waste disposal.

4. Data Collection and Reporting Plan describes the process of gathering and reporting data and information to DPH-SAPC. Data must be collected and submitted to DPH-SAPC on an annual basis.

The following data must be collected and submitted annually by March 31st to the designated contact at DPH-SAPC:

- Number of participants served;
- Number of sterile syringes dispensed;
- Number or weight of used syringes collected/disposed;
- Number of naloxone doses dispensed;
- Number of direct services provided by services type (testing, screening, MAT, other medical care);
- Number of linkages/referrals to external services by services type (testing, screening, MAT, other medical care, housing);
- Number of trainings/education sessions attended; and
- Log documenting incidents with community members and/or law enforcement.

Harm Reduction Competencies

Each harm reduction SSP must ensure that all staff maintain competencies in the following areas:

- Foundations of harm reduction, which include an overview of proven intervention and risk reduction principles, strategies, and communication skills;
- Overdose prevention and response;
- Safer injection principles and techniques;
- Education about proper sharps disposal and prevention of needle-stick injuries;
- HIV and viral hepatitis prevention education;
- Medications for Addiction Treatment (MAT);
- How and when to refer for behavioral health services;
- Safer sex education; and
- Health consequences of substance use.

Certification Application

Prospective harm reduction SSP organizations shall complete and submit the DPH-SAPC harm reduction SSP certification application (available via <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/sapc/bulletins/START-ODS/22-09/SAPCIN22-09SSP-Certification-Application-distributed.pdf>) and all required policies and procedures via email to harmreduction@ph.lacounty.gov.

References

Below are references used to develop the DPH-SAPC harm reduction SSP certification:

1. Operating Requirements for Syringe Exchange Programs Authorized by the California Department Public Health, Office of AIDS:
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/sapc/bulletins/START-ODS/22-09/CADPH-Guidelines-for-SSPs-2020.pdf>
2. California Health and Safety Code, § 118286, 121349, 120100, 120775
(<http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes.xhtml>)
3. Cal/OSHA [Title 8, Section 5193](#) (Accidental Needlestick Injury - Section (f)(3), Sharps Injury Log - Section (c)(2).
4. CalOHII Statewide Health Information Policy Manual (SHIPM):
<http://www.chhs.ca.gov/ohii/shipm>

Effective Period

The DPH-SAPC harm reduction SSP certification is effective May 6, 2022. Please contact DPH-SAPC's Associate Medical Director for Prevention at (626) 299-3228 or via HarmReduction@ph.lacounty.gov for questions or technical assistance.

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