

Share Needle Exchange Program (SNEP)

What is the purpose of a needle exchange program?

-The Share Needle Exchange Program's mission is to reduce the spread of disease (HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, etc.) among active drug users in Clark County, with the use of harm reduction techniques and education. SNEP strives to be holistic in its approach by utilizing Share's street outreach program, while also partnering with other agencies in Clark County to provide wrap around services, such as drug treatment referrals, basic first aid & wound care, and safer sex tips. The program aims to create a non-judgmental environment that meets guests "where they're at", and that prioritizes each person's dignity.

Why do we need this in my community?

-Some of your community members are in need of services, but are difficult to reach and engage with due to their location (being outside Vancouver, away from a lot of services). We want to bring the services and support to them! The more we can engage and build relationships with these people in your community, the more likely we are to be able to assist them in engaging in other services that can help their quality of life—physical healthcare, mental health services, substance use treatment, and housing.

So, how will this work, and impact my day-to-day?

-We're hoping you won't even know we're there, with the exception of you noticing less used needles in your public spaces. We'll operate at a designated space, for one to two hours every week. We'll show up and set up a table with our supplies, and with plenty of information about supportive services available to our clients. Once we are up and running, we'll also have community partners coming with us. These partners will be able to set clients up with the services they may have been lacking thus far (mental health, physical health, substance use treatment, etc.).

-When clients arrive, they are asked to sign a Community Conduct Agreement, making clear the expectations that they will be respectful to staff, volunteers, community partners, community members, and other clients. They will also be made aware that they are not allowed to use any drugs in the vicinity of the needle exchange and the surrounding area.

What's the benefit?

Needle exchange programs have been shown to:

- reduce new cases of HIV and Hepatitis C
- be cost effective in their preventive measures, costing far less to provide clean needles than to treat a person infected with HIV
- allow clients to build meaningful relationships with providers, leading them to be more likely to engage in treatment services
- increase safe-injection practices among users (reduce sharing of needles, using broken needles, etc.)

Needle exchange programs have NOT been shown to:

- increase/promote injection drug use; actually, studies have found that average age of first injection rises, and the rate of injection falls as exchange programs are put into place
- increase criminal activity in the area of the needle exchange

For more information, please contact:

Katelyn Benhoff

Lead Outreach Case Manager

Share Vancouver

360-980-0040

leadoutreach@sharevancouver.org