

Exchange Works – Staff Training and Client Anonymity

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Introduction

Inequities in access to health care are prevalent for people who use substances, and these inequities are heightened by structural and social determinants of health. Harm reduction emphasizes human rights and the importance of treating all people with respect, dignity and compassion—regardless of substance use. ‘Harm Reduction is an evidence-based, client-centered approach that seeks to reduce the health and social harms associated with addiction and substance use’. It focuses on promoting safety and does not require that substance use be discontinued.¹

Purpose

Individuals or families accessing harm reduction programs require non-judgmental care regardless of setting, income, age, gender identity, ethnicity, or other socio-demographic characteristics.

In order to ensure clients feel safe when accessing new needles, stem, or bowl kits, it is important that staff follow these procedures when providing harm reduction services.

Policy

Exchange Works staff will operate from a place of mutual respect, understanding and reciprocity, creating safety for all who access services. Principles of harm reduction and health equity will be applied.

Staff will support clients to access the needle exchange service respecting the need for anonymity of many clients. The following procedures outline the parameters for anonymity for delivery of services.

Procedures

All staff, volunteers, and placement students must be trained prior to performing needle exchanges or stem/bowl kit distribution.

1. Training will include:
 - Background and rationale for the needle exchange program including evidence regarding the reduction in HIV, Hepatitis B and C rates

- Philosophy of harm reduction practices
 - Needle exchange Policies and Procedures
 - Some basic knowledge of non-violent crisis intervention (Staff Safety Policy)
2. Training can be provided by SMDHU staff who coordinate the needle exchange program or staff previously trained at community organizations.
 3. Clients will not be required to provide their name or any other identification as a prerequisite to receiving needles or stem/bowl kits from the program.
 4. Referrals to additional services will be offered only after there is some indication from the client that additional services may be desired.
 5. Information about the availability of additional services may be included in packages of new needles and other supplies or stem/bowl kits that are distributed to the client.
 6. If a client asks about documentation, they will be informed that tracking of services offered is done anonymously for statistical purposes only.

Related Policies

EW – Documentation
EW – Key Messages and Education
EW – Media Inquiries
EW – Needle Stick Injuries
EW – Provision and Return of Supplies
EW – Staff Safety

HS0109 [Workplace Violence and Prevention](#)

Final Approval Signature: _____

Review/Revision History:

2006.07.18, 2007.07.07, 2009.08.13, 2010.06.29, 2010.08.17, 2016 09 14 References, 2023.03.16

References

[Canadian Nurses Association \(2018\) Joint position statement, Harm Reduction and Substance use](#); retrieved from https://www.cna-aiic.ca/-/media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/joint_position_statement_harm_reduction_and_substance_use.pdf

Canadian Mental Health Association (2022) Harm Reduction; retrieved from [Harm Reduction \(cmha.ca\)](https://www.cmha.ca)