



# Syringe Access and Exchange Programs and the Opioid Epidemic in Milwaukee

AIDS RESOURCE CENTER OF WISCONSIN

SIXTEENTH STREET COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

UMOS

# Current Public Health Challenges Related to Injection Drug Use

The Milwaukee City-County Heroin, Opioid and Cocaine Task Force rightly states the following:

**“This (substance abuse and opioid epidemic) is the most significant public health crisis we have faced, and its scope and magnitude cannot be overstated. ...**

**... This is a public health issue, and therefore solutions must be framed through a public health lens.”**

# Public Health Challenge: Opioid-related overdoses and deaths

According to the Milwaukee City-County Heroin, Opioid, and Cocaine Task Force, the Milwaukee Community Opioid Prevention Effort, the Wis. Dept. of Health Services and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- ▶ There were 1,873 reported opioid overdoses in Milwaukee County in 2017
- ▶ There were 337 opioid-related deaths in Milwaukee County in 2017
- ▶ Milwaukee has the highest rate of hospital visits due to substance abuse in Wisconsin
- ▶ 916 opioid-related overdose deaths were reported in Wisconsin in 2017, up from 111 in 2000 and 410 in 2010
- ▶ Nationally, in 2017, more than 72,000 people died from opioid overdose – more than 200 per day

# Public Health Challenge: HIV and hepatitis C infection

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- ▶ Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) are both transmitted via the sharing of syringes, needles and/or other injection equipment.

# HIV in Milwaukee

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services:

- ▶ In 2017, there were 118 new cases of HIV diagnosed in the City of Milwaukee
  - ▶ 8% of new cases of HIV in Milwaukee in 2017 were attributed to injection drug use
  - ▶ There has been a slight, but noticeable, increase in the number of new HIV infections attributed to injection drug use in Milwaukee between 2015 and 2017
  - ▶ Lifetime cost of HIV Treatment - \$379,668

# HCV in Milwaukee

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services:

- ▶ In 2017, there were 722 new cases of HCV reported in Milwaukee County
  - ▶ Milwaukee County accounted for 24% of the new HCV infections statewide
  - ▶ The majority of all new HCV cases result from injection drug use
  - ▶ HCV infections among people aged 15-29 have more than tripled, an increase attributed to injection drug use
  - ▶ There are cures for HCV, but they are expensive, ranging from \$26,000-\$94,000 based on the treatment regimen

# Syringe Services Programs: Effective Opioid Overdose, HIV and HCV Prevention

## What is a Syringe Service Program (SSP)?

- ▶ SSPs are community-based public health programs that provide services and materials to people who inject drugs or people who have a person who injects drugs (PWID) in their life. SSPs work to improve the health of the community and reduce the incidence of communicable diseases and preventable overdose deaths through the use of evidence-based harm reduction interventions including:

<b>Providing sterile needles, syringes and other injection equipment</b>	<b>Providing for the safe disposal of needles, syringes and other injection equipment</b>	<b>HIV, hepatitis and STI testing and linkage to health services</b>
<b>Education about overdose prevention as well as distribution of naloxone</b>	<b>Referral to substance use disorder treatment</b>	<b>Referral to medical, mental health and social services</b>

# Syringe Service Programs, Continued

According to the CDC:

**“SSPs are an effective component of a comprehensive, integrated approach to HIV prevention** among PWID. These programs have also been associated with reduced risk for infection with hepatitis C virus. ... Many SSPs also provide linkage to critical services and programs, such as HIV care, treatment, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) services; hepatitis C treatment, hepatitis A and B vaccinations; screening for other sexually transmitted diseases and tuberculosis; partner services; prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission; and other medical, social, and mental health services.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/ssps.html>



# Syringe Service Programs, Continued

According to published research and the CDC, SSPs **DO**:

▶ **Increase entry into substance use disorder treatment**

- ▶ IDUs who utilize SSPs are 5 times more likely to enter treatment

▶ **Reduce needle stick injuries among first responders and the public**

- ▶ By providing proper disposal of used syringes and needles

▶ **Reduce opioid overdose deaths**

- ▶ By teaching IDUs how to respond to and how to prevent drug overdoses, and
- ▶ By providing training on how to use and access to naloxone

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/risk/cdchiv-fs-syringe-services.pdf>

# Syringe Services Programs, Continued

According to published research and the CDC, SSPs:

▶ **Do not increase crime:**

- ▶ A study analyzing 20 months of Baltimore City Police Department arrest records showed ‘a lack of association of overall and type-specific arrest data with [syringe services] program implementation...’ (Marx MA, Crape B, Brookmeyer RS, et al. *Trends in crime and the introduction of a needle exchange program. Am J Public Health 2000;90(12):1933-36*)

▶ **Do not increase drug abuse:**

- ▶ The Surgeon General of the United States has determined, based on research, that syringe access programs ‘would be effective in reducing drug abuse...’ (Federal Register / Vol. 76, No. 36 / Wednesday, February 23, 2011 / Notices.)

# What if no SSPs existed?

- ▶ Scott County, Indiana (pop. 23,870)
  - ▶ An HIV outbreak among IDU in Scott County between 2011-2015 resulted in 215 new infections (for scale, this would equate to 5,362 infections in the City of Milwaukee over the same time period)
  - ▶ A study conducted at Yale School of Public Health found that the number of HIV infections in Scott County could have been less than 10 over the time period if the State of Indiana had responded sooner to reported HCV infection increases.
  - ▶ Syringe Service Programs were illegal in Indiana until March 26, 2015

# Syringe Service Program Effectiveness in Wisconsin

- ▶ The AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin initiated the first syringe exchange program in Milwaukee in 1994 and quickly expanded it statewide.
  - ▶ In 1993 there were 118 HIV infections in Wisconsin attributed to injection drug use, representing 18.2% of new diagnoses
  - ▶ In 2017, there were 17 new cases of HIV infection attributed to injection drug use, representing 6.5% of new diagnoses
- ▶ **Syringe exchange in Wisconsin supported a 65% reduction in transmission of HIV attributed to injection drug use.**

# ARCW Lifepoint Program

The ARCW Lifepoint Program has been operating in Milwaukee since 1994. Lifepoint provides PWID and people who have PWID in their life with syringe exchange services; HIV, HCV and STI testing; naloxone as well as training on how to administer it to someone in need; referral and linkage to substance abuse counseling and treatment.

► Over the past two years, Lifepoint has:

Conducted 30,312 client encounters	Distributed 2,860,112 syringes and collected 1,713,003 syringes
Made 2,411 referrals for substance abuse counseling and treatment	Conducted 550 HIV tests and 498 HCV tests
8,380 individuals trained on the use of naloxone were provided doses of naloxone for free	758 times someone who received naloxone and training saved a life

# Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers

- ▶ Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers' HIV program began in 1991. Sixteenth Street's HIV department offers comprehensive outreach testing of HIV/HCV and other STI.
  - ▶ In 2018 we conducted 539 HIV tests and 71 HCV tests. Conducted 65 Syphilis tests and Chlamydia/Gonorrhea tested 225.
  - ▶ Conducted 30 community education events in 2018
- ▶ In 2004 Sixteenth Street started a needle exchange program as a public health strategy creating a harm reduction program that decreases the risk of HIV and Hepatitis C.
  - ▶ Needle exchange runs two days a weeks
  - ▶ Distributed 150,720 syringes and collected 101,650 syringes
  - ▶ Canvass large perimeter 2 times a day on needle exchange days
  - ▶ Conducted 6 needle exchange community education events in 2018
  - ▶ Make referrals to AODA
  - ▶ Provided 120 Sharps containers in 2018 for both IDU and non-IDU

# UMOS, Inc.

- ▶ UMOS has been delivering HIV Prevention Services throughout Milwaukee county for over 30 years, providing non-judgmental, non-coercive, prevention services to high risk individuals
  - ▶ In 2018, staff conducted 255 HIV tests and 198 STI tests
  - ▶ Staff distributed 21,700 condoms and outreached to over 5,000 individuals in the community
- ▶ In August 2018, UMOS implemented a new needle/syringe exchange program called SAFE Exchange. This strategy is a CDC evidence-based intervention that provides direct services that limit the spread of infectious disease via contaminated syringes.

Since our doors opened:

- ▶ 101 exchanges with clients ( some clients come back weekly )
- ▶ Distributed 2,901 syringes and collected 1,810 syringes (62.4% return rate)
- ▶ Referred 6 clients into detox/AODA Treatment and provided 17 educational sessions
- ▶ Secured partnerships with Milwaukee County Behavioral Services and First Step Detox for direct access to treatment services for UMOS clients
- ▶ Provided 25 Sharps containers for IDU and 12 sharps containers for non-IDU (4 sharps for 2<sup>nd</sup> District Police)
- ▶ 01/01/2019, UMOS started the used syringe pick up services. To date: 01/07/2018 retrieved over 1,000 needles from 14<sup>th</sup> and national location and on 01/17/2019 retrieved 500 needles from 13<sup>th</sup> and Greenfield location.
- ▶ Staff checks area regularly for syringe litter on SAFE Exchange days.

# Inappropriately Discarded Syringe Waste Prevention and Removal

- ▶ Firstly, just like most people do not litter, most PWID do not inappropriately discard their syringes
- ▶ Why do some PWID inappropriately discard needles?
  - ▶ The syringe exchange program they use is closed
  - ▶ The individual is not aware of disposal options
  - ▶ The individual is homeless and/or lacks transportation to a disposal location
  - ▶ The individual is fearful of becoming involved with the police/criminal justice system



# Client Education on Syringe Disposal and Referral to Drug Treatment

- ▶ In addition to providing access to syringe exchange and STI/HIV/HCV testing and treatment, syringe exchange programs also actively educate program participants about:
  - ▶ access and referral to drug treatment options, including making phone calls with participants to enroll in treatment programs
  - ▶ the importance of discarding used syringes safely and responsibly
  - ▶ harm reduction and the importance of reducing behaviors - including the use of drugs - that can negatively impact quality of life

# Addressing Inappropriately Discarded Syringes

- ▶ Alderman Perez, Milwaukee Police Department District 2 leadership, the City of Milwaukee Health Department and the City Attorney's Office are working with community-based organizations to develop solutions to the problem of inappropriately discarded syringes in the near south side of Milwaukee.

# Convening of MHD, MPD and CBOs to identify sustainable solutions

- ▶ The Milwaukee Health Department is committed to working with stakeholders, residents, and community based organizations to develop a policy and plan to address sustainable solutions
- ▶ ***Collectively, we would welcome the opportunity to report back to the Committee in 6 months to report on our progress, including feasibility of some of the following potential solutions:***

# Solutions: Inappropriately Discarded Syringe Waste Prevention and Removal

- ▶ Creation of new disposal sites/locations for used syringes
  - ▶ Identification of additional community locations as collection sites
  - ▶ Systematic approach to tracking and coordinating response to community requests for syringe pick-up, including GIS mapping to identify hot spots
  - ▶ Enhanced partnership with Safe and Sound Milwaukee Drug Free Community Coordinators and other CBOs
  - ▶ Repurposing of old mail boxes into accessible disposal locations
- ▶ Additional education of syringe exchange program participants about inappropriately discarding syringes
- ▶ Increased availability and access to puncture proof containers – such as laundry detergent and coffee canisters – for people who inject drugs
- ▶ Initiation of community sweeps and neighborhood-based syringe pick up days

# Additional Items for Consideration:

- ▶ Financial support to support greater access to syringe services programs in Milwaukee
- ▶ Financial investment in case managers to help navigate and place people struggling with addiction into treatment
- ▶ Systemized documentation of where hot spots are popping up so that syringe services programs can better respond to community requests

Questions?

# Additional Resources

- ▶ CDC. Syringe Service Programs for Persons Who Inject Drugs in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Areas — United States, 2013. *MMWR* 2015; 64(48);1337-41.
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# Additional Resources

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# Additional Resources

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