



Team Name: Harm Reduction and Healthy Sexuality	Reference Number: CLI.6210.PL.007
Team Lead: Regional Manager Public Health-Healthy Living	Program Area: Public Health-Healthy Living
Approved by: Executive Director - North	Policy Section: General
Issue Date: December 11, 2017	Subject: Harm Reduction
Review Date:	
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POLICY SUBJECT:

Harm Reduction

PURPOSE:

- To provide a high level of care to clients receiving services within Southern Health-Santé Sud in distribution of harm reduction supplies.
- To engage clients who may have been disadvantaged by mainstream services.
- To prevent the spread of blood borne pathogens by providing information, making available harm reduction supplies and facilitating referrals and/or linkage to appropriate health and/or social services, including drug treatment, in the target population.

BOARD POLICY REFERENCE:

Executive Limitation (EL-2) Treatment of Clients
Executive Limitation (EL-7) Asset Protection and Risk Management

POLICY:

The region provides harm reduction supply distribution services through identified community health locations and outreach sites. Designated staff provide harm reduction supplies through the use of evidence-informed education guidelines. Public Health Nurses (PHNs) provide leadership and support in harm reduction supply distribution in their communities. Harm Reduction Supply Distribution includes:

- Safer drug use supplies
- Safer sex supplies and birth control provision
- Drug overdose prevention kits

IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- Harm Reduction is a pragmatic response that focuses on keeping people safe by minimizing death, preventing disease and injury associated with higher risk behavior, while recognizing that the behavior may continue despite the risks.
- There are many reasons why people engage in risk behavior and not all people are able to make the immediate changes necessary to refrain from such behaviors.
- Harm reduction supply distribution programs are an evidenced-based, safe, cost-effective way of reducing the transmission of blood-borne viruses such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis C.
- Harm reduction supply distribution programs facilitate access to care, treatment and support services.
- Harm reduction is client-centered, non-judgmental, and facilitative, rather than coercive (WRHA, 2016).

PROCEDURE:

Harm reduction supplies are available anonymously and encounters are informed by the principles of harm reduction (WRHA, 2016). Access to supplies extends to whoever needs them for harm reduction purposes, regardless of age or location of residence.

1. Program Locations

- The program operates out of identified community health sites within Southern Health-Santé Sud and potential outreach sites.
- All staff participating in harm reduction supply distribution are expected to complete the applicable education.

2. Build Relationships

- Building relationships and trust is an essential feature of harm reduction. Such relationships are critical to ensure a client's choice is understood, expressed and advocated.
- Provision of services within a welcoming context supports the development of rapport and trust.
- Trusting relationships take effort and time to develop.
- Respect the client's choice as to the level of interaction.
- Provide opportunity for clients to get information while being sensitive to timing of when/how information is presented.
- Provide opportunity to have conversations about reducing harm, while respecting the wishes of clients who refuse if they are not ready to accept information about their health risks or condition, even when the risky behavior may reduce a client's capacity for self-determination.
- Be aware of the position of relative power in professional relationships with clients to identify and minimize sources of coercion.

3. Support Behaviors to Reduce Harms

- Conversations with clients about current and safer sex and/or drug practices will support behaviors to reduce harm, and expose opportunities for service/program improvement and advocacy.
- Knowledge of a client's sexual practice and/or route of drug administration used assists to know which supplies are necessary to reduce harm as well as support transition to less risky behavior.
- Providing information and support can enable clients to act on their own behalf in meeting their health and health care needs.

4. Access

- Peer distribution is supported. Some clients may collect harm reduction supplies for secondary distribution. This is a strategy to reach people who use drugs but have not yet attended sites to obtain safer supplies.

REFERENCES:

Ontario Needle Exchange Programs: Best Practice Recommendations (2006). Strike, C., Leonard, L., Millson, M., Anstice, S., Berkeley, N. & Medd, E. https://eurotox.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/CA_Ontario-needle-exchange-programs-best-practice-recommendations-2006.pdf

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority: Operational Guideline: Harm Reduction Supply Distribution, updated May 2017

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Position Statement on Harm Reduction 2016. <http://www.wrha.mb.ca/community/publichealth/files/position-statements/HarmReduction.pdf>