Recommendations for Harm Reduction Programs Providing Services to People Who Use Drugs

Drug use practices that can lead to transmission of HIV, HCV, and other infections are pressing issues affecting communities throughout Canada. To stay current with emerging evidence and ensure that people have access to high-quality services that help prevent HIV and HCV transmission, best practice recommendations have been developed and provide guidance to service providers working in harm reduction.

Complete Document:

Best Practice Recommendations for Canadian Harm Reduction Programs that Provide Service to People Who Use Drugs and are at Risk for HIV, HCV, and Other Harms

Part I: This document has new and improved best practice recommendations about needle and syringe distribution, other injection equipment distribution, handling and disposal of used drug-use equipment, and safer drug-use education. In addition, lots of new material can be found on safer crack cocaine smoking equipment distribution and opioid overdose prevention (education and naloxone distribution).

Part II: This document has best practice recommendations for service delivery models, including within prisons, as well as special considerations for distribution of safer equipment for steroid use, and foil and crystal methamphetamine smoking. In addition, material on referrals, vaccinations and testing for communicable disease and specific injection related complications are included.

One-Pager Summaries:

Supply Distribution

Injection:

- Alcohol swab distribution
- Ascorbic acid distribution
- Cooker distribution
- Disposal and handling of used drug equipment
- Filter distribution
- Needle and syringe distribution
- Sterile water distribution
- Tourniquet distribution

Inhalation

- Safer crack cocaine smoking equipment distribution
- Foil distribution
- Safer crystal methamphetamine smoking equipment distribution

Steroids

- Needle distribution for anabolic steroid injection, hormone injection, piercing and/or tattooing

Education

- Safer drug use education
Delivery Models and Community Development

- Program delivery models (includes fixed-site NSPs, mobile NSPs, pharmacy-based distribution and purchase, peer-based outreach, and needle/syringe vending machines)
- Substance use treatment referrals
- Mental health services referrals
- Housing services referrals
- Relationships with law enforcement
- Education and other services for the prison context

Overdose

- Opioid overdose prevention: education and naloxone distribution

Health Related Topics

- Injection-related complications: prevention, assessment and treatment
- Testing services for HIV, hepatitis C, hepatitis B, and tuberculosis
- Vaccination services for hepatitis A and B, pneumococcal pneumonia influenza, tetanus, and diphtheria
- HIV and/or hepatitis C treatment referrals