

NOVEMBER 2022

Points of Interest...

- The St. Clair County Health Department's Teen Health school-based health centers, Port Huron, Algonac and Capac locations, completed a 4-day extensive state accreditation process. Many hours of preparation time went into planning for the review. A formal notification letter is pending which will explain the rating process and outcomes. An "A" rating is expected.
- St. Clair County Health Department remains committed to harm reduction strategies designed to reduce the negative consequences of drug use (including Hepatitis C, HIV, and overdose) as well as acknowledging and advocating that there is a relationship between the health of the community and substance use disorders. Recently a strong letter of support for Syringe Service Programs was received and endorsed by all ten of Michigan's Pre-paid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHP) (see attached). An [FAQ](#) was also developed to assist in understanding harm reduction strategies such as syringe access/exchange by SCCHD staff. These documents are located [here](#) on the SCCHD website.
- St. Clair County Health Department in partnership with the Blue Water Immunization Partnership (BWIP) hosted two drive-thru influenza and Covid-19 vaccine clinics in November. The first was at the Tri-hospital EMS station in Wadhams and the second was at Marysville Fire and EMS station. 55 vaccines were administered.
- The Outreach team attended five community events resulting in a total of 1,443 face-to-face interactions. The following was provided: 10 Medicaid referrals (assisting individuals with finding a doctor or specialist within their insurance network); 71 community referrals (mostly for food, clothing, shelter and legal aid); and assisted 5 individuals in completing a Medicaid insurance application (Medicaid health insurance provides comprehensive health care services to low income adults and children).
- The Environmental Health division helped facilitate China Township obtaining an EGLE permit to construct nearly 2,400 feet of sewer line along King Road to serve 15 residences between Marine City Highway and Booth Road. The low-pressure grinder pump system, anticipated to be installed next spring, will alleviate a long-term sewage disposal issue. Four homes (north of Booth Road) with sewage disposal issues were not included in the final project plans. Therefore, Environmental Health has reach out to each of these residents to start the process of installing individual sewage disposal systems.
- A meeting with the St. Clair County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) stakeholders' group was held on November 21. Participants spent time brainstorming strategies that will be put into action in an effort to meet the goals and objectives of the 2023-2027 CHIP. Over 20 people were in attendance.



**Harm Reduction: A Consensus Statement of Support
by Michigan’s 10 Community Mental Health Entities (Pre-Paid Inpatient Health Plans)**

Michigan has a comprehensive infrastructure of prevention, treatment and recovery services for people living with a substance use disorder (SUD). Individuals living with a SUD, however, often follow a bumpy road to recovery and sobriety. Social stigma, judgment from others and shame are barriers to individuals seeking treatment. Even after people have engaged in treatment, they can stumble on that road and relapse. Most people living with addictions, however, do recover. A 2017 [Harvard study](#) found that while 10% of the U.S. adult population has had a SUD, 9.1% of American adults are in recovery. Despite that, [per the CDC](#), the U.S. exceeded 107,000 drug overdose deaths in 2021 largely related to heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine being laced with synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

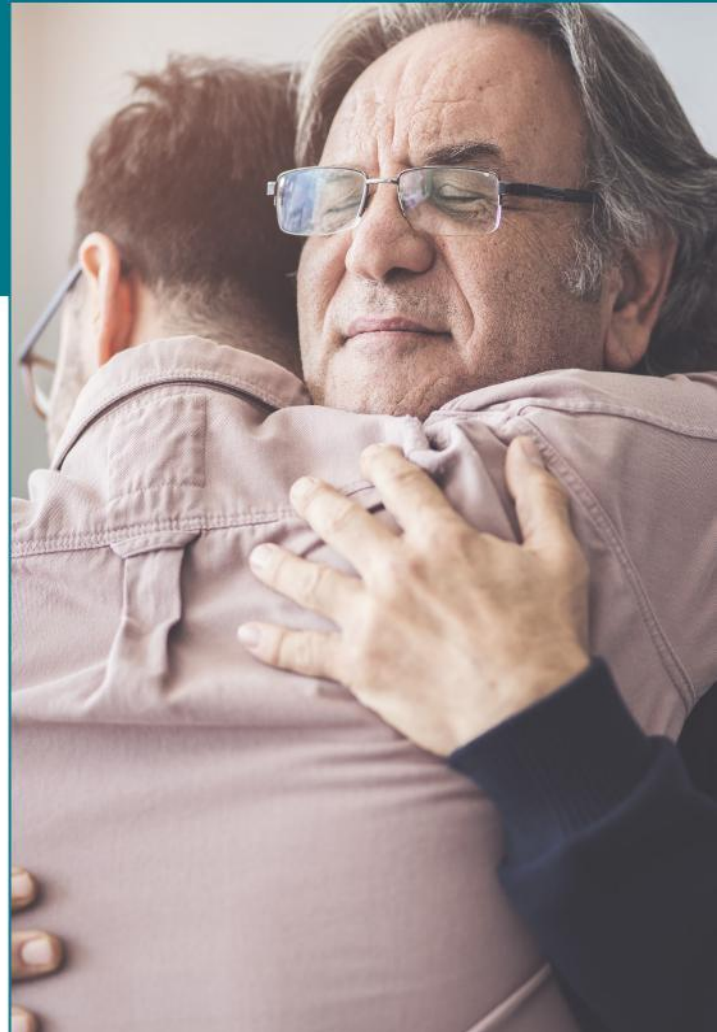
Harm reduction is an evidence-based strategy to keep people alive by supporting those struggling with active substance use *wherever they are* in their journey to recovery. If they are still using substances, a harm reduction approach works to lower the chance of overdose or of contracting Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis C (HCV) or other diseases. Harm reduction strategies include distribution of naloxone, the overdose reversal medication that’s saved many lives, and Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) which offer education about and connections to treatment pathways as they concurrently safely dispose of used syringes and distribute sterile syringes.

The myth that distributing sterile syringes increases drug use by enabling people to keep using drugs has been thoroughly discredited. In fact, individuals who use syringe service programs are 5 times more likely to engage in treatment and 3 times more likely to quit using drugs than individuals with a SUD that do not use an SSP (per [CDC](#)). Syringe Service Programs are not associated with any increase in crime (per [NIH](#)) and studies show that for every one dollar spent on harm reduction efforts, \$3 is saved in public health costs. Programs have also been shown to result, for example, in a 50% reduction in incidence of HIV and HCV (per [NIH](#)). By any measure, Syringe Service Programs are an effective means to save lives and keep people healthy along their journeys to recovery in our communities.

As the Mental Health Code – designated Community Mental Health Entities, Michigan’s Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPs), the regional entities that oversee the state’s public behavioral health system, strongly endorse evidence-based practices like harm reduction. We are working to create a coordinated seamless continuum of care including prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery. Along those lines, 86 SSP sites have been established around the state. We strongly support the work of Michigan’s Syringe Service Programs in helping save lives of people who may be struggling with substance misuse or are in the early stages of recovery. We encourage our community partners to do the same.

**ENDORSED AND ADOPTED BY ALL TEN OF MICHIGAN’S PRE-PAID INPATIENT HEALTH PLANS/
DESIGNATED COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH ENTITIES, OCTOBER 4, 2022**

Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) FAQs



What is an SSP?

Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) are community-based programs that provide access to sterile needles and syringes, facilitate safe disposal of used syringes, and provide and link to other important services and programs such as:

- Substance use disorder treatment programs.
- Screening, care, and treatment for viral hepatitis and HIV.
- Naloxone distribution and education.
- Mental health and other medical and social services.
- Education about overdose prevention and safer injection practices.
- Vaccinations, including those for hepatitis A and hepatitis B.
- Screening for sexually transmitted diseases.
- Abscess and wound care.



Are SSPs legal?

Some states have passed laws specifically legalizing SSPs because of their life-saving potential. SSPs may also be legal in states where possession and distribution of syringes without a prescription are legal.

Decisions about use of SSPs as part of prevention programs are made at the state and local levels. The Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 includes language that gives states and local communities meeting certain criteria the opportunity to use federal funds provided through the Department of Health and Human Services to support certain components of SSPs, with the exception of provision of needles, syringes, or other equipment used solely for the purposes of illicit drug use.



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

Adapted by SCCHD October 2022



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Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) FAQs - Continued

Do SSPs help people to stop using drugs? Yes.

- People who are injecting drugs using an SSP are more likely to enter treatment for substance use disorder and stop injecting than those who don't use an SSP.^{1,2,3,4}
- New users of SSPs are five times as likely to enter drug treatment.
- People who inject drugs and used an SSP regularly are nearly three times likely to report a reduction in injection frequency as those who have never used an SSP.²

Do SSPs reduce infections? Yes.

- Sharing needles and works can lead to transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis, bacterial, and fungal infections and other complications by providing access to sterile syringes and other injection equipment.
- SSPs help people prevent transmitting bloodborne infections when they inject drugs or provide easy-to-access treatment care.^{5,6,7}
- SSPs can prevent other life-threatening and costly health problems, such as infections of the heart (endocarditis), serious skin infections, and deep tissue abscesses.

Do SSPs lead to more crime and/or drug use? No.

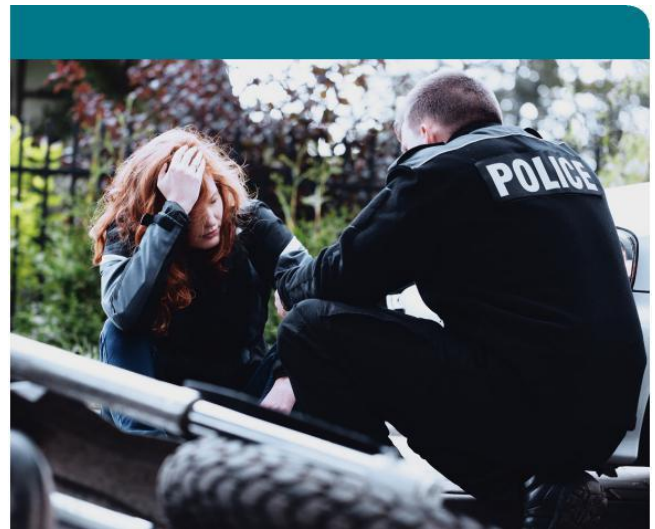
- Data shows that SSPs do not cause or increase illegal drug use, crime or violence within a community.^{14,15}

Are SSPs cost effective? Yes.

- SSPs reduce health care costs by preventing HIV, viral hepatitis, and other infections.
- The estimated lifetime cost of treating one person living with HIV is more than \$450,000.¹⁶
- Hospitalizations in the U.S. for substance-use-related infections cost over \$700 million each year.¹⁷

Do SSPs cause more needles in public places? No.

- Studies show that SSPs protect the public and first responders by providing safe needle disposal and reducing the presence of needles in the community.^{8,9,10,11,12,13}



St. Clair County's Harm Reduction: Syringe Services Program (SSP) FACTS

What is Harm Reduction?

It is a **movement** for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people. People can get help “where they’re at,” at their own pace, and make healthier choices to prevent disease.

It is both a **strategy** and **tool**. The strategy is defined as a set of practical public health strategies designed to reduce the negative consequences of drug use, lead people to a healthy lifestyle and build a better community. The tool guides us to manage the gap between active substance use and recovery to reverse overdoses, and reduce the negative impacts of behaviors that can cause harm.

What is the role of the Health Department in combating drug use?

The Health Department combats drug use by:

- Partnering with other community organizations that work with people using drugs.
- Acknowledging and advocating that there is a direct relationship between the health of the community and substance use issues.
- Hosting a comprehensive SSP called, “The Exchange”.



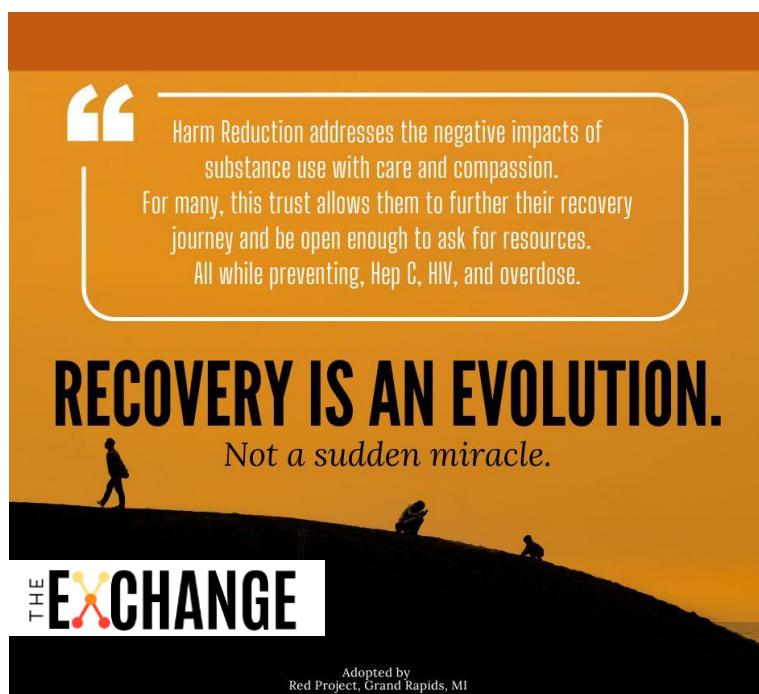
What does The Exchange do?

The Exchange provides naloxone kits, recovery information, safe needle disposal resources, rapid HCV and HIV testing, and first aid / hygiene items on-site at the main location of the Health Department and through an on-the-go Mobile Unit to meet people “where they’re at”.

Providing stigma-free services by using person-centered language, avoiding bias, providing education, and building rapport/trust with clients by alleviating harm along the way is a goal of the Exchange.

The Exchange is located at St. Clair County Health Department 3415 28th Street, Port Huron, MI 48060. Hours of operation are Monday 10:00 am – 6:00 pm and Tuesday through Friday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. No appointment necessary. A short intake is required for services.

Disclaimer: Local dollars are not used to support the St. Clair County Health Department's Exchange program.



“ Harm Reduction addresses the negative impacts of substance use with care and compassion. For many, this trust allows them to further their recovery journey and be open enough to ask for resources. All while preventing, Hep C, HIV, and overdose.

RECOVERY IS AN EVOLUTION.
Not a sudden miracle.

THE EXCHANGE

Adopted by
Red Project, Grand Rapids, MI

Endnotes

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