



City of Victoria Needle Exchange Harm Reduction Policy - Recommendations to the Vancouver Island Health Authority

The City of Victoria strongly supports the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) in developing one or more fixed needle exchange programs in the Capital Region as part of a comprehensive addictions strategy, including:

- a) a broader distributed needle exchange program throughout the Region; and,
- b) a five pillars approach whereby harm reduction services like needle exchange, are developed and delivered in concert with: problematic substance use and addiction prevention services; addiction treatment services, including supportive recovery; adequate and affordable housing; and, enforcement.

In conjunction with a distributed needle exchange program, fixed needle exchange sites are important Provincially-mandated and operated harm reduction services, along with fully-funded, regionally-based, problematic substance use and addictions prevention, addictions treatment, and supportive recovery programs.

Following the lessons learned from the former Cormorant Street needle exchange operation and the unsuccessful proposal for a fixed needle exchange on Princess Avenue, the City of Victoria requests and makes the following recommendations to VIHA for any future fixed needle exchange sites:

1. That first consideration be given to operating the services from a facility owned or controlled (e.g., leased) by VIHA or the Provincial government, as these may serve to offer greater stability and accountability for the service. In the absence of a readily available VIHA/Provincial facility, other property held by a contracted health service provider be considered.
2. To address operational and other issues, VIHA work with City staff, the Victoria Police Department and any contracted service provider to:
 - a) Develop and undertake a community engagement strategy.
 - b) Prepare a comprehensive operating plan, including a Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA) to address issues such as site security, building and site improvements, and minimize negative impacts on neighboring sites, such as litter and loitering.
 - c) Establish a needle exchange and recovery protocol based on best management practices and the guidelines and policies set out by the BC Centre for Disease Control and the Provincial government.
 - d) Develop a client engagement strategy, to include protocols for referral to addictions treatment and supportive recovery services.
3. Implement, facilitate and monitor the GNA to address ongoing operating issues. GNA membership should include surrounding and nearby neighborhood residents, institutions, property owners and businesses, neighborhood association representative, the contracted social service provider, VIHA staff (as chair), Victoria Police and City of Victoria staff, and other stakeholders in the immediate vicinity. The GNA should contain features such as a respectful conduct policy with client rights and responsibilities, and a dispute resolution protocol.

4. In the context of a Five Pillars approach, the needle exchange program should also have a strong and clearly evident emphasis on drug use counseling and treatment and supportive recovery referral and other services that support the health and wellbeing of clients.
5. An annual operating review and report should be provided, where feasible, including both qualitative and quantitative data, pre and post-operation. The City will provide an annual estimate of costs incurred by the City supporting the facility, including street cleaning, policing and staff liaison.

Positive aspects should also be measured, such as HIV prevention, community engagement, feedback from service users and neighbourhood.