



DEPARTMENT NOTICE

21-085
05/14/21

Syringe Access and Disposal Programs

(Re-issue DB 17-007)

The San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) continues to fund Syringe Access and Disposal Programs. California continues to experience significant morbidity and mortality related to injection and non-injection drug use. During the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has documented increases in fatal opioid overdose and injection-related HIV transmission during the coronavirus pandemic, including in California.

Members should be aware that the syringe program is a place where injection drug users bring their used syringes and access sterile equipment. In addition to providing sterile supplies, Syringe Access & Disposal programs provide an opportunity to link program participants to services including drug treatment. Many injection drug users cannot visit a site themselves and instead have a friend or partner access services for them. This individual may be carrying many new or used syringes or other supplies, to or from a site because they are accessing services for multiple people.

Members should use discretion when they encounter possible syringe program participants and are advised that the intent of the Department is not to interfere with the program.

Members shall not confiscate syringes, alcohol wipes, naloxone, biohazard waste containers, or other sterile injection equipment, at or near access and disposal sites. When in doubt, members should ask a supervisor to respond to the scene to ensure the policy is followed.

In 1993, San Francisco began funding syringe access after a local state of emergency was declared because of the HIV epidemic. SFDPH funds organizations to provide access to syringes, alcohol wipes, biohazard waste containers, as well as other sterile injection equipment to reduce the transmission of bloodborne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis C. Overdose is the leading cause of death among people who use drugs. SFDPH supports overdose prevention by providing take-home prescriptions of naloxone and fentanyl test strips. Naloxone is distributed in injectable and nasal forms.

On January 1, 2006, Governor Schwarzenegger signed Assembly Bill (AB) 136. The bill amends previous legislation allowing counties and cities to authorize syringe programs in their jurisdictions without the necessity to declare a state of local emergency.

Assembly Bill (AB) 2077 went into effect January 1, 2021 and removes all conditions on possession of syringes for personal use and extends the authorization of physicians and pharmacists to furnish syringes without a prescription until January 1, 2026. There is no limit on the number of syringes someone may possess for personal use, no age limit for possession, and it is lawful to possess syringes obtained from any source.

AB1810 (Committee on Budget, Statutes of 2018 amended the Health and Safety Code) to allow that “any materials deemed by local or state health department to be necessary to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, or to prevent overdose, injury, or disability” may be lawfully dispensed by a Syringe Program and possessed by Syringe Program Participants. Materials designated in this manner are not subject to criminal paraphernalia laws.

California code specifies that pharmacists, physicians and syringe exchange programs are all authorized sources for nonprescription syringes for disease prevention purposes.

Please direct questions about the programs to Eileen Loughran, Community Liaison, Community Health Equity & Promotion Branch, San Francisco Department of Public Health at (415) 218-8582. Each program supported by the SFDPH will have a copy of this bulletin.



WILLIAM SCOTT
Chief of Police

Per DN 20-150, all sworn & non-sworn members shall electronically acknowledge this Department document in PowerDMS. Members whose duties are relevant to this document shall be held responsible for compliance. Any questions regarding this policy should be made to sfpd.writtendirectives@sfgov.org who will provide additional information.