



## **Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department**

### **Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department Needle Exchange Program**

The Ohio County Needle Exchange Program for Ohio County allows and regulates needle exchange within Ohio County. The Needle Exchange Program is necessary to assure that the distribution of clean injection apparatus and biohazard containers is carried out in a manner consistent with the goal of preventing infectious disease transmission among injecting drug users, and to encourage the provision of the greatest number of treatment and prevention strategies possible, with the ultimate goal of reducing the incidence of HIV and Hepatitis B and C among injecting drug users, their sexual partners, and their offspring. Such prevention will promote the health, safety and welfare of the community.

Public health needle exchanges have been around for some time across the country. Currently these programs have gained national attention due to the HIV outbreak in southern Indiana. Unofficially the idea of distributing sterile syringes to the public was done in 1986 in the Boston, Mass area. In 1988 needle exchange programs were started in Tacoma Washington, San Francisco and New York. Programs currently operate in 32 states, with over 200 programs. Regionally, programs operate in Pittsburgh (Prevention Point Pittsburgh) and in three locations in Ohio (Portsmouth, Cincinnati and Cleveland). In West Virginia two county health departments are active in needle exchange, Ohio and Cabell.

The Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department's Needle Exchange Program provides a way for those individuals who are an injecting drug user (IDUs) who continue to inject to safely dispose of used syringes and to obtain sterile syringes at no cost. The program addresses two issues with our growing intravenous drug problem.

- Assist in stopping the spread of infectious disease by getting dirty needles off the street
- Create an opportunity for health care workers to connect with addicts.

Overall goal of the program is to reduce and/or prevent the spread of HIV and Hepatitis through the use of dirty syringes. The Needle Exchange will offer a 1 for 1 exchange of syringes at a specific location.

#### **SYRINGE (NEEDLE) EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

It is estimated that an individual injecting drug user injects about 1,000 times a year. This adds up to millions of injections, creating an enormous need for reliable sources of sterile syringes. The Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department's Needle Exchange Program (NEP) provides a way for those IDUs who continue to inject to safely dispose of used syringes and to obtain sterile syringes at no cost. The department NEP provides a range of related prevention and care services that are vital to helping IDUs reduce their risks of acquiring and transmitting blood-borne viruses as well as maintain and improve their overall health.

The Needle Exchange offers a 1 for 1 exchange of syringes at a specific location(s) in an effort to stop the spread of HIV and Hepatitis through the use of dirty syringes.

#### **Other Services**

- HIV/AIDS education, testing and counseling

- Condom distribution to prevent sexual transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Referrals to substance abuse treatment and other medical and social services
- Distribution of alcohol swabs to help prevent abscesses and other bacterial infections
- Tuberculosis (TB) screening, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and other infections
- Vaccinations

The health department is working with several community partners on this project, including the US Attorney's Office in Wheeling and Northwood Health Systems. The health department has also reached out to other community organization and programs for input, assistance and support. At this time the department's Needle Exchange Program will be held:

**Needle Exchange Schedule**  
**Fridays**  
**Northwood Health Systems - Eoff Street**  
**9:00am-2:00pm**

The Needle Exchange would be closed during all major holidays.

Contact:

Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department  
(304) 234-3682 or (304) 830-0420  
Howard Gamble, MPH Administrator

**Plan and Evaluation:**

Our plan is to roll out our program with one location (late summer or early fall of 2015), monitor the volume and evaluate to see what needs to be adjusted or corrected. If the program sees an increase in volume we would then look to enroll additional partners (homeless coalition office, health right, etc) as additional exchange locations. If these partners are brought on board each site would then do some limited training, would be provided a supply of needles, swabs, educational material and a sharps container. The health department would then collect the sharps containers when the partners call and dispose in our medical waste. Although we are doing a one for one exchange, we will accept used or unwanted needles, regardless of the quantity.

**Data:**

The overall goal is to reduce the risk of spreading disease (such as Hepatitis B, C and HIV/AIDS) and decrease the number of dirty/used needles in the community.

Hepatitis C, source WVDHHR

- Incidence of acute hepatitis c in WV has increase since 2007.
- From 2007-2014 total cases of acute hepatitis c is 298.
- Ohio County rates are lower than most WV counties, but the county has seen spikes during this time period.
- The Incidence of acute hepatitis c is greater in WV than for the US.
  - WV has one of the highest rates of hepatitis C in the country, along with Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia.
  - 364% increase from 2006-2012 of acute hepatitis c infections.

HIV, source WVDHHR and AIDSVu

- At the end of 2012, 125 of every 100,000 people were living with an HIV infection diagnosis in Ohio County, source AIDSVu.
- WVDHHR Surveillance data for Ohio County from 2000 to 2015 lists 29 cases of HIV/AIDS.
- Ohio County has a higher number of cases of HIV/AIDS than other counties in the region.

Hepatitis B, source WVDHHR

- WV acute hepatitis B cases from 2007-2014 is 962
- Rates of hepatitis B are above the national average.
- WV has seen a steady increase in reported cases, especially since 2003.
- The number of cases for Ohio County is low, 1-0 cases per year.
- Regional county data is also low compared to the rest of the state.