

# VIHA Health Facts



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## Mobile Needle Exchange and “No Service” Areas in Victoria

Clean needles are distributed from more than 170 locations across BC. Needle Exchange programs are a simple, cost-effective way to reduce needle sharing, halt the transmission of Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS, increase the safe disposal of used needles, provide information to injecting drug users and help them obtain drug treatment, detox, and primary health care. There is overwhelming evidence that needle exchange programs work: they help prevent the transmission of disease and they DO NOT promote substance use.

VIHA coordinates needle exchange and recovery through its own secondary distribution sites and with 3 groups in the Greater Victoria region, including a mobile needle exchange, outdoor needle disposal boxes and regular needle sweeps in high drug-use neighbourhoods throughout the city.

### Mobile Needle Exchange Services – Downtown Victoria

- The enhanced mobile needle exchange service started in Victoria’s downtown in June 2008, following the termination of the lease for the fixed site needle exchange on Cormorant Street, which was operated by AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI) under contract with VIHA.
- VIHA’s Board of Directors has committed that fixed-site needle exchange services will not be provided at any location without specific commitment, assurances and demonstrated actions from the City of Victoria to address the issues and concerns on public order and safety.

### “No Service” Areas

- AVI’s Code of Conduct for the mobile needle exchange service outlines service parameters for the operation of the mobile service, including areas along the mobile route where needle exchange will not be provided by AVI’s mobile outreach team: <http://avi.org/images/codeofconduct.pdf>
- This applies to residences, open businesses, schools and day-care centers anywhere along the mobile exchange route – and that includes the 900 block Pandora.
- If signaled by a client in front of a residence or an open business, school or day-care, the client will be informed that services cannot be provided at that location and the client may then choose to meet the outreach team at an appropriate area for service.
- This Code of Conduct was developed in May 2008 by AVI with input from VIHA, the City of Victoria and the Victoria Police Department.
- This Code of Conduct – and the No Service restriction outlined therein - applies to the AVI mobile needle exchange service only.

### Agencies in Victoria are available to collect discarded needles. Please call:

- AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI) at 250-384-2366
- Victoria AIDS Resource & Community Service Society (VARCS) at 250-888-4487
- Society of Living Injection Drug Users (SOLID) at 250-298-9497
- VIHA Communicable Disease Program at 1-866-665-6626