

VIHA Health Facts



Updated: February 15, 2011

SOUTH VANCOUVER ISLAND – NEEDLE EXCHANGE SERVICES DISTRIBUTION AND COLLECTION INFORMATION

- Harm reduction services – which includes needle exchange services – are a key component of a four pillars approach to the societal challenge of addiction (the other pillars are Prevention, Treatment and Enforcement).
- Harm reduction supplies, including needles and syringes, are provided by the BC Centre For Disease Control (www.bccdc.ca/prevention/HarmReduction/default.htm) to health authorities and community agencies who in turn distribute these supplies to users.
- Harm reduction services help prevent the spread of diseases such as Hepatitis C and HIV, reducing harm not only to the addicted individual but also to others in the community.
- Harm reduction programs also bring marginalized people back into society, connecting them with withdrawal and treatment resources and the health care system.
- Effective harm reduction programs not only save lives, they lower health care costs.
- Harm reduction, including needle exchange services, are provided in a variety of ways in Greater Victoria, including through contracted service providers, informal secondary distribution channels and through some public health units. These services are provided at “fixed” locations as well as through mobile services (foot, van, bicycle).
- Contracted harm reduction service providers include AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI), Victoria AIDS Resource & Community Service Society (VARCS), Society of Living Injection Drug Users (SOLID) and Prostitutes Empowerment Education & Recovery Society (PEERS).
- In November 2009, VIHA announced a Vancouver Island wide expansion of distribution methods and locations for needle exchange services. This ‘distributed model’ of needle exchange services will make clean needles available at public health units as well as through other VIHA front line service sites. Implementation of the expanded, secondary service site model began in Fall 2010.
- Detailed monthly statistics are kept to track the number of needles distributed and collected. The statistics for the Victoria area include needles distributed and collected by the above-listed service providers, other providers and the City of Victoria’s drop boxes.
- The numbers of needles distributed have historically been greater than the number of needles collected, as needles can also be appropriately discarded through packaging and disposal (see www.viha.ca/NR/rdonlyres/1533C2DB-760B-4A29-8724-2C5449E69520/0/SaferCommunitiesforEveryone_final.pdf).

(more)

Needle Distribution and Collection Statistics:

Month	Totals Needle Distributed	Total Needles Collected
Jan-April 2008*	45,400/month	36,900/month
April-Dec 2008	293,680	212,721
Jan – Dec 2009	337,754	264,060
Jan – Dec 2010	204,445	203,448

**This data is based on monthly collection averages for the period January – April 2008 and includes distribution and collection through the Cormorant Street fixed site needle exchange which closed May 31, 2008. May 2008 statistics are not included due to increased distribution that occurred at this site in anticipation of the closure.*