

## **Clean Needle and Syringe Exchange Annual Report July 2007 – June 2008**

The County of Marin, Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, HIV/AIDS Services Program oversees the Marin AIDS Project's needle exchange program (the Point Program). The program uses a harm reduction philosophy which advocates working with clients "where they are."

There are three weekly needle exchange sites which are located in Mill Valley (Southern Marin), San Rafael (Central Marin) and Novato (Northern Marin) as well as drop in hours Monday through Friday at the office of Marin AIDS Project. Outreach is also conducted through agencies providing services to people who are homeless and indigent as well as direct outreach at locations where drug users congregate. Continued presence in these settings allows the provision of ongoing education and risk reduction counseling. In addition, needle exchange staff is doing outreach in collaboration with the county's mobile testing van in the Canal and in Marin City and Marin AIDS Project hosts a testing clinic at its offices in central San Rafael coincident with weekly, evening needle exchange.

In all settings, staff and trained volunteers give participants the knowledge, skills, supplies and support necessary to reduce the risk of needle-using and sexual practices that place them at highest risk for HIV, HCV and other sexually transmitted infections.

During the past fiscal year, a total of 50,118 syringes were exchanged for clean ones. There were 931 exchanges made including 505 secondary exchanges. Eight percent (8%) of participants were estimated to be under the age of 30; 48% over 45 years of age. Ninety-three percent (93%) of participants were Caucasian, 3% were African American and 2% were Latino. Thirty-five percent (35%) of participants were female and 65% were male.

The number of syringes exchanged has been declining for the past few years from 95,477 reported in 2003/4 to the 50,118 reported in 2007/8. A study by Marin AIDS Project into the possible reasons for the large decline this fiscal period compared to the previous year found a reduction or cessation of client drug use for some exchangers as well as the loss of several exchangers through death or moving out of the county. It is also possible that some of the decline can be explained by exchangers purchasing syringes at pharmacies participating in the Syringe Access program.

The Point Program uses the exchange contacts to provide educational information to participants and to make referrals, as needed. During this fiscal year, two participants were given overdose prevention education and 39 were given risk reduction counseling. Twenty-five referrals were made to drug treatment programs and five people were referred to medical/STD testing. Additionally, HIV and Hepatitis C testing information was made available to all participants. Of those diagnosed with HIV in Marin (excluding San Quentin), 18% of females and 6% of males listed IDU as a risk factor demonstrating the importance of maintaining the Point needle exchange program in the Marin community.

## **Syringe Access Program Report April, 2009**

Senate Bill 1159 (Chaptered September 20, 2004) created the Disease Prevention Demonstration Project (DPDP) in California to prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases among injection drug users, their partners and their children. It further authorized local county and city jurisdictions to implement a local Disease Prevention Demonstration Project that permits pharmacists registered with the local project to make available new sterile syringes or hypodermic needles without a prescription under specified conditions to qualified individuals. The Board of Supervisors authorized this project in Marin in March 2005; currently 14 local pharmacies are registered to participate in the program. This includes all seven Longs Drug in Marin, all three Marin Walgreens and four independent pharmacies.

The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Community Health and Prevention Services (CHPS), coordinates the program, working with Marin County Environmental Health Services and community partner, Marin AIDS Project (MAP). The District Attorney acts as the liaison with the Police Chiefs, assuring that local law enforcement is up to date on the policies and protocols of the program. More specifically, CHPS registers pharmacies and convenes a Syringe Access Task Force as needed. The Task Force is comprised of County staff, community-based organization members, and a pharmacist active in the community. MAP lists participating pharmacies on its website. Marin County Environmental Health Services distributes educational pamphlets which include information about prevention, testing, and treatment services along with sharps containers to pharmacies. Environmental Health staff trains pharmacy staff on the program and collects data on utilization of the syringe access program. Utilization is measured by counting the number of pamphlets/sharps containers distributed to consumers.

In the latest survey of participating pharmacies implemented by Environmental Health Services, it was determined that 6 locations including 4 Long's and 2 Walgreen's reported consistent utilization patterns. Syringes purchased through this program are sold in small sharps containers called Fitpacks with an educational brochure attached. The sales of these 10 packs of syringes are estimated to range from 2-3 sales per month to 30-35 sales per month at individual pharmacies.

The Syringe Access Task Force has been convened to discuss strategies for improved outreach and training.

This cooperative effort between public health programs, the needle exchange program and participating pharmacies provide an important service educating the community and increasing access to clean syringes throughout Marin, with the goal of decreasing blood-borne disease such as HIV and Hepatitis C.