

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE COMPREHENSIVE HARM REDUCTION SITES

WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE HARM REDUCTION?

Comprehensive harm reduction (CHR) is a public health strategy to reduce negative health outcomes for persons who engage in behaviors that put them and others at risk for disease or injury. CHR for persons who inject drugs is also referred to as needle exchange, syringe services or syringe access. Distribution of sterile hypodermic needles and syringes and disposal of used hypodermic needles and syringes can decrease the spread of HIV and Hepatitis and help reduce other negative health outcomes as endocarditis and abscesses. CHR programs facilitate entry into drug treatment, testing and medical services, especially when they are part of a comprehensive prevention strategy.

WHO CAN START A PROGRAM AND WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS CHR'S MUST FOLLOW?

CHR programs must be operated by local health departments or affiliated organizations with which VDH contracts. Each CHR program must apply for authorization from the State Health Commissioner. Agencies must complete a two-step process that includes submission of an application package and a pre-operational site visit. VDH will issue memoranda of agreement for approved sites that includes program, data collection and reporting requirements. Programs must submit reports to VDH and abide all applicable laws and regulation, as well as the CHR Program Requirements. Laws, regulations, and application materials can be found at: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/disease-prevention/chr/>.

WHAT LEGAL PROTECTIONS ARE IN PLACE FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS OF CHR PROGRAMS?

Under the *Code of Virginia Section 54.1-3467*, no persons authorized by the State Health Commissioner as a part of comprehensive harm reduction programs can be charged with possession of syringes or other injection supplies, while performing the duties of their job. Agencies approved to provide CHR services must maintain a list of personnel authorized to distribute and collect syringes.

WHAT LEGAL PROTECTIONS ARE IN PLACE FOR CHR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS?

CHR participants have legal protection from paraphernalia possession laws. All participants must be issued a card that identifies them as participants in a CHR program and verifies that needles and syringes in their possession were obtained from that program. Participants must present this identification card to law enforcement when being asked about syringes in their possession. CHR

participants with drugs in their possession are not protected from prosecution for drug possession. Charges; the residue of drugs found in used syringes is the exception.

HOW IS CHR FUNDED?

No state funding was allocated to support CHR. The Virginia Department of Health has received approval from CDC to utilize federal HIV prevention funds to support the program. These funds may be used for personnel, supplies, mobile units, HIV and hepatitis C testing, linkage to services, data collection etc. Federal funds may not be used to purchase needles, syringes or other equipment used to inject or prepare illegal drugs, naloxone or other medications. Organizations providing CHR services will need to identify other funding sources for syringes and injection supplies such as foundations, individual donors, corporate giving, fundraisers, donations from medical supply companies, etc.

WHAT SERVICES MUST BE PROVIDED UNDER A CHR PROGRAM IN VIRGINIA?

A list of required services and services that must be provided either directly or through referral may be found on the CHR website: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/disease-prevention/chr/>.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CHR PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES?

North American Syringe Exchange Network (NASEN): <https://nasen.org/>

Harm Reduction Coalition (HRC): <http://harmreduction.org/>

HRC Syringe Access Manual: <http://harmreduction.org/issues/syringe-access/tools-best-practices/manuals-and-best-practice-documents/syringe-access-manual/>

HRC Peer Based Distribution Manual: <http://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/pdse-toolkit-with-links.pdf>

North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition: <http://www.nchrc.org/>

Washington Heights Corner Project: <http://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/whcp-pp.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/index.html>