

Needle Exchange Consultation, March 9, 2006
47 total participants, 23 of them here for the first time.

A. New information from the Pierce County Health Department. Nigel Turner

1. Some clients from the needle exchange van have transferred to the “D” Street site.
2. Two new pharmacies, one on the Hilltop and one in the county, have agreed to exchange needles. (An hour and a half is spent each day in contacting pharmacies and asking them to participate. So far a total of 14 pharmacies have agreed.)
3. The Health Department earnestly asked all members of the group to propose alternate sites for the needle exchange van.
4. The Health Department will continue to promote increased use of the “D” Street site.

B. New information from the Point Defiance AIDS Project. David Purchase

1. In calendar 2005 we averaged 680 exchanges a month, sent 450 people to treatment, referred 222 people to health care, 30 people to HIV testing, 19 people to HIV care services, 1 person to hepatitis services, and 14 people to other social services.
2. Preliminary data from the survey, with 60 surveys completed out of the target of 150, showed the largest single group cluster were 26 responses, 43%, who answered yes to three out of the following:
 - homeless, camped, lived in the shelters or couch surfed
 - 98402 or 98405
 - visited the exchange two or more times a week
 - visited other services in the area two or more times a week
3. In answer to a question Mr. Purchase reported that one accepted estimate of the number of injectors in the county was 6800 and they injected on an average of 3½ times per day.

C. New information from neighbors

1. Four neighbors reported that syringes continue to be found in the South “G” Street area and present a danger to residents, especially children.
2. Three new participants reported that the flyer announcing this meeting was the first they knew of the presence of the needle exchange van and that it explained for them some of the problems they have seen with the presence of addicts in the area.
3. A resident made a video of a person injecting himself in the yard of a private residence. It has been turned over to the police. (The person came back later and defecated in the yard.)
4. A business person reported that bottle caps and tourniquets have been left by clients of the van. There are 14 sworn statements by people who have been impacted by clients of the van, and he is prepared to go to court to have the van removed.
5. A neighbor countered that she found such a threat against a public service to be offensive.
6. A member of Guadalupe House commented that the neighborhood used to have drive-by shootings. However, now children in the community are catching the school bus without ever being threatened. Here troubled people are not treated like scum, and some have made

it through treatment. Lawsuits against vulnerability don't make sense. There is a need for care as much as for anything else.

7. A service provider in the area observed that the zip codes with the highest number of clients for the van (98405, 04 and 44) are those with the highest level of poverty in the metropolitan area. The problem requires a more fundamental change than the exchange of needles.
8. A neighbor who works in gardens close to the needle exchange van has cleaned up garbage and defecation left by clients of the van. Nevertheless, she sees the presence of the needle exchange as an opportunity to teach youth about the tragedy that drugs bring into people's lives. She feels that there would be more needles without the presence of the van. Addicts pick up any needles they see lying around.
9. A new participant has had to pick up needles and scrape defecation from her stairs. She would like to see us look for alternatives.
10. A business person reported needles and drugs stashed in her planters. She fears that the needle exchange is enabling drug usage.
11. One resident repeated from the last meeting that King County has a policy of not locating needle exchanges in residential areas, but the response was that the result is that the King County program is not nearly as effective as Pierce County's.

D. Establishing a Working Group to Continue our Task

1. Participants agreed that a working group, composed of one representative from each of the groups that has been involved in this consultation, be assigned the task of working out the specifics of a concrete agreement. This group is to bring back a report to our next general meeting, which is Thursday, May 11, 5:00-6:30, for comments.
2. The list of groups to be represented is:
 - a. Bates Technical College
 - b. Business Community (Upper Tacoma Business Association)
 - c. Community Based Services, Tacoma Avenue South Area
 - d. Guadalupe House
 - e. Hilltop Action Coalition
 - f. Homeless People
 - g. Hospitality Kitchen
 - h. Neighbors skeptical about the Needle Exchange being here
 - i. Neighborhood Council, New Tacoma
 - j. Pierce County Health Dept.
 - k. Point Defiance AIDS Project
 - l. Tacoma Police Department
 - m. Tacoma City Staff person
 - n. Residential property owners
 - o. Weed and Seed
3. Nigel Turner of the Health Department accepted the position of convener, responsible for bringing the group together.
4. A Conflict Resolution professional should be used by the working group if finances are available. The group will select the person for this task. Anyone who has participated in this consultation is encouraged to submit a nomination to one of the following:
 - Nigel Turner. 798-6057. niturner@tpchd.org
 - Herman Diers. 383-3056 Extension 113. HilltopActionCoalition@yahoo.com

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2006, 5:00-6:30 P.M., 1224 South "I" St.

For information contact Herman Diers, Hilltop Action Coalition.
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