

County of Santa Cruz Syringe Services Program FAQs

1. What is a syringe exchange program?

Syringe exchange is a public health intervention which is proven to reduce the transmission of blood-borne pathogens in the community. It works by providing people who cannot or will not stop injecting illegal drugs with new syringes and a place to safely dispose of used syringes.

2. Does Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency (HSA) Syringe Services Program (SSP) give syringes to people who don't bring in used syringes?

Our SSP has a 1-for-1 syringe exchange policy. For each used needle a participant brings in to exchange, they get a clean one in return. If they bring 10 used needles, they get 10 new needles, etc. The number of needles a participant can receive is capped at 100. A participant can exchange for up to two individuals (secondary exchange) with the 1-for-1 policy and cap at 100 for each participant still enforced. If a participant presents at the exchange program without used syringes, they are referred to HSA Clinics for a clinical assessment to be provided or prescribed clean syringes. The participant may also be referred to local pharmacies or other exchange networks if they are unable to visit our clinic.

3. How do we know syringe exchange reduces the number of HIV infection?

Because syringe exchange has been politically contentious, it is the most thoroughly studied public health intervention of the past thirty years. These studies have consistently shown that syringe exchange reduces new HIV infections, increases successful uptake of drug treatment, and does not result in increased crime or violence in communities in which they are started. Federally funded reports have concluded that syringe exchanges reduce the transmission of HIV while not increasing drug use.

More information on the effectiveness of SSPs can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/syringe-services-programs-summary.html>

County of Santa Cruz Syringe Services Program FAQs

4. Along with syringes, what other supplies are participants of the syringe exchange program receiving?

The Santa Cruz County SSP follows the evidence-based recommendation to provide supplies that reduce harm to those who are injecting. Providing necessary supply items, besides clean syringes, will reduce the potential disease and infection risks associated with the re-use of injection equipment. Blood-borne infections such as Hepatitis C can be transmitted through sharing any piece of injection equipment that may have blood on it. Re-use of supplies can also lead to serious bacterial infections, such as wound abscesses and endocarditis. Other supplies offered at the SSP include, but are not limited to sharps containers, bandages, condoms, lubricant, caps/cookers, tourniquets, water, cotton, alcohol wipes, antibiotic ointment, razors, and toothbrushes.

5. What other services does the County SSP Program provide?

The SSP Program provides referrals to HSA Clinics for medical treatment of wounds and infectious diseases, educates clients on available countywide drug treatment options, provides naloxone overdose prevention and reversal training, offers referrals for HIV/HCV C testing, contraceptives, and enrollment in health care.

6. Does the Santa Cruz County SSP Program hand out educational materials?

Yes, the SSP Program provides participants with a broad range of educational materials. Topics include drug treatment and rehabilitation, infectious disease such as Hepatitis C and HIV information and prevention, testing resources, safer injection techniques, and syringe disposal.

7. What to do if you find syringes in the community?

If you have found syringes in the community, first determine if they are located in a place where they present a **threat to public safety**.

- If so, **call 911**, and the city police or Sheriff's Office will be dispatched, depending upon the location of the property.
- If no threat to public safety exists, please call the city administrative office where the property is located.

County of Santa Cruz Syringe Services Program FAQs

If no threat to public safety exists and the property is located in an *unincorporated area of the county*, call the **Santa Cruz Department of Public Works at 454-2160** to report the finding and request removal.

If syringes are found on *private property in the unincorporated area of the county*, please call **Environmental Health at 454-2022** to report the finding and request removal.

More information on Syringe Service Programs can be found here:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/index.html>

California Department of Public Health website:

https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CID/DOA/Pages/OA_prev_sep.aspx

Please also visit our website for additional information regarding the program, monthly data reports, and education resources:

www.santacruzhealth.org/SSP