

Syringe Exchange Programs in NC

What law enforcement needs to know



Syringe Exchange Legalized

- “ On July 11, 2016 North Carolina enacted *G.S. 90-113.27* legalizing syringe exchange programs (also called needle exchange)
- “ Under *G.S. 90-113.27*, no employee, volunteer or participant of a syringe exchange can be charged or prosecuted for possession of syringes, other injection supplies or drug residue on supplies obtained from or returned to a syringe exchange



What is a Syringe Exchange Program (SEP)?

- “ SEPs provide sterile syringes and injection equipment to participants while collecting and disposing of used syringes.
- “ SEPs are a portal connecting participants to services such as substance use treatment programs.
- “ Research has shown SEPs do NOT increase drug use or crime in communities where they operate



Benefits of SEPs to LEOs

- “ A 66% drop in needle-stick injury to LEOs (users return syringes to SEPs instead of carrying them).
- “ Decreased chance of transfer of communicable disease to LEO (fewer syringes in public and syringes are less likely to be infected).
- “ Decreased calls for service regarding used needles found discarded in public areas.

**1 in 3 officers
will be stuck in
their career and
28% will get
multiple sticks.**



new

used one time

used six times

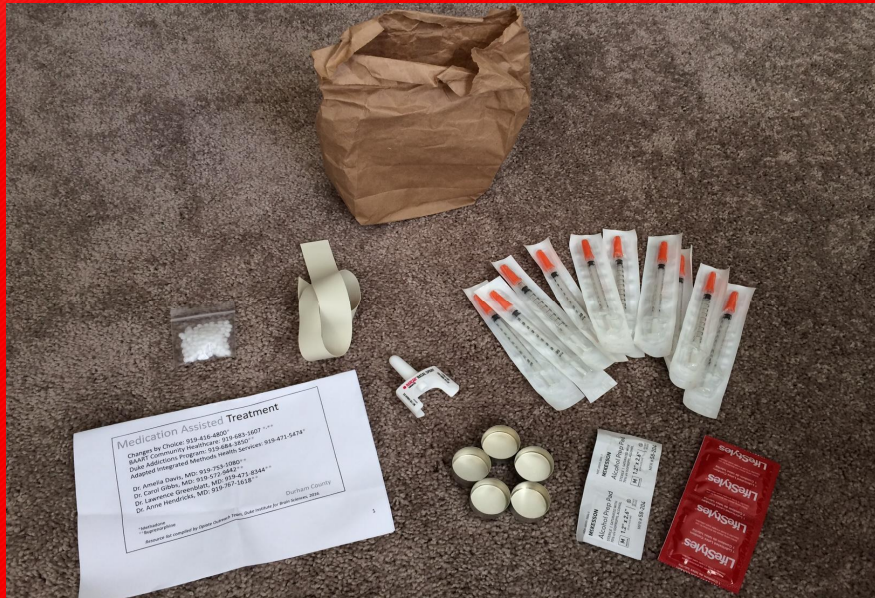
Other SEP Benefits

- 1) Significant reductions in HIV and hepatitis C transmission among participants and decrease in taxpayer burden to treat these diseases.
- 2) Fewer syringes discarded in streets (SEPs collect and incinerate used syringes).
- 3) SEPs are required to provide information pertaining to treatment services. Research shows participants are five times more likely to seek treatment if they join an SEP. This can result in less crime and fewer calls for service for law enforcement.



What Supplies do SEPs give out?

“ SEP supplies may include (but are not limited to) syringes, cottons, cookers, tourniquets, condoms, alcohol swabs, naloxone, treatment referrals, etc.



Why do SEPs provide cookers and cottons?

- “ Hepatitis C is a blood borne virus that can live for several days on the surface of any item that comes in contact with infected blood. It is very common among injection drug users.
- “ Cookers, cottons, tourniquets, water and other items used to inject drugs can become infected with hepatitis C. For this reason, SEPs distribute these supplies so that people do not share them and transmit the virus.
- “ Use PPE when coming into contact with these items!



SEP Provides Participant Limited Immunity

Under *G.S. 90-113.27*, no employee, volunteer, or participant of a syringe exchange can be charged with or prosecuted for possession of any of the following:

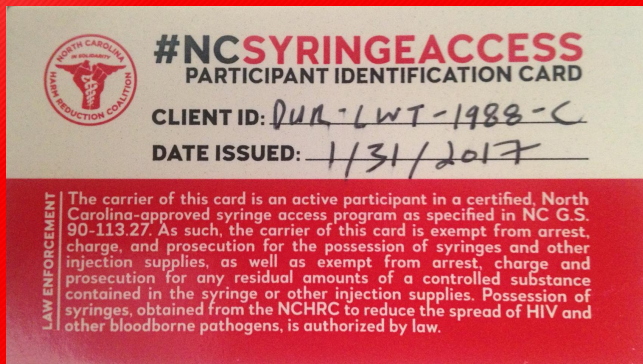
- (1) Needles, hypodermic syringes, or other injection supplies obtained from or returned to a program established pursuant to this section.
- (2) Residual amounts of a controlled substance contained in a used needle, used hypodermic syringe, or used injection supplies obtained from or returned to a program established pursuant to this section.

This limited immunity applies if the person provides written verification that the supplies were obtained from an SEP (typically in the form of an ID card).



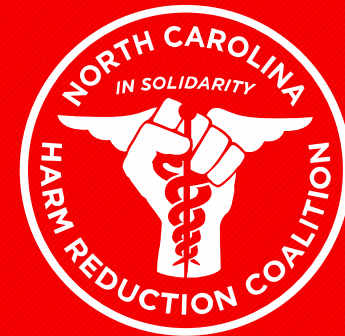
Sample ID Card from an SEP

This ID card complies with **G.S. 90-113.27** and is the type you will most frequently be presented with by an SEP participant.



(Front)

(Back)



What do I do if I encounter an SEP participant?

- “ Ask if they have an ID card from an SEP. Each card has a unique identifier code (Ex: DUR-LWT-1988-C) that can be verified by NC Harm Reduction Coalition.
- “ You can call us at 919-295-6209 if you would like to verify the card against our participant database. (This is optional. *G.S. 90-113.27* does not require any additional verification beyond the presentation of a card).
- “ Do not arrest the participant for possession of items or residue for which they have immunity under *G.S. 90-113.27*. These types of arrests can erode participant trust in the SEP ID card process and create an adversarial encounter with you. If you call 919-295-6209 after hours or cannot reach someone, take down the participant’s information and leave a message. Someone will return your call within 24 hours.



What If Someone Claims to be an SEP Participant But Doesn't Have an ID Card?

- “ If you stop a person who claims to be an SEP participant but has lost or misplaced the ID card, call 919-295-6209 to request a letter of verification from the NC Harm Reduction Coalition. If you cannot reach someone, take down the person's information and leave a message. Someone will return your call within 24 hours.
- “ Under *G.S. 90-113.22* even someone who is not a verified participant in an SEP is immune from charge or prosecution for possession of a syringe or sharp object including residue if they declare these items to an LEO before a search.



SEPs in My Area

- “ [This slide will vary by department]
- “ For a full list of sites in the state visit:
- “ <http://www.nchrc.org/syringe-exchange/legal-syringe-exchange-sites/>



What if I have additional questions?

- “ For more information on SEPs, visit <http://www.nchrc.org/syringe-exchange/>
- “ Call Tessie Castillo with the NC Harm Reduction Coalition at 919-809-7718 for general questions or training requests (not to verify a participant).

