Viability of Comprehensive Harm Reduction and Syringe Services Program in Cecil County
Presentation to Cecil County Community Health Advisory Committee

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Harm reduction describes a set of practical strategies that reduce negative consequences associated with high-risk behaviors.
Comprehensive Harm Reduction Services

- Comprehensive harm reduction services can include:
  - Referral to substance use disorder treatment, including medication-assisted treatment
  - Referral to medical, mental health, and social services
  - Tools to prevent HIV, STDs, and viral hepatitis including counseling, condoms, and vaccinations
  - HIV and hepatitis testing and linkage to treatment
  - Education about overdose prevention and safer injection practices
  - Safe disposal containers for needles and syringes
  - Sterile needles, syringes, and other injection equipment
Comprehensive Harm Reduction Programs

- Comprehensive harm reduction programs:
  - Reduce drug use by increasing entry into substance use disorder treatment
  - Reduce overdose deaths by teaching people who inject drugs how to prevent and respond to drug overdose
  - Reduce needlestick injuries among first responders and the public by providing proper disposal
  - Reduce new HIV and viral hepatitis infections by decreasing the sharing of syringes and other injection equipment
  - Save healthcare dollars by preventing infections
  - Do not increase local crime in the areas where they are located
  - Do not increase drug use
  - Are widely adopted
Progress to Date

- Identified and engaged local stakeholders by attending or participating in more than 15 community meetings
- Conducted 17 context interviews with health department staff
- Visited 5 existing harm reduction programs near Cecil County
- Conducted 14 key informant interviews with Cecil County stakeholders
- Conducted 50 surveys of people who are actively using injection drugs or in recovery in Cecil County
Key Informant Interviews

- 14 interviews were conducted with local stakeholders representing a wide spectrum of relevant sectors including law enforcement, first responders, school system, Union hospital, community organizations, treatment centers, recovery houses, Cecil County government, and the health department.

- Most stakeholders supported a comprehensive harm reduction program in Cecil County.
Surveys

- 45 individual surveys were conducted of people who are actively using injection drugs in Cecil County
- 5 individual surveys were conducted of people in recovery in Cecil County
- Surveys were conducted in partnership with community organizations and at the health department by Peer Recovery Specialists
Survey of People Who Use Injection Drugs in Cecil County (n=45)

Is there a need for a SSP in Cecil County?

- Yes: 98%
- No: 2%

If a SSP was in Cecil County, would you use it?

- Yes: 100%
Survey of People Who Use Injection Drugs in Cecil County (n=45)

If a SSP was in Cecil County, why would you use it?

- “to be safe”
- “prevent a lot of disease from sharing injection drugs”
- “personal hygiene and health reasons”
- “less chance of spreading disease”
- “cut down on disease transference”
- “prevent sharing of needles”
- “don’t want to get sick”
- “to keep from getting hepatitis or HIV/AIDS”
- “clean up streets”
- “I think it would clean up Elkton”
Survey of People Who Use Injection Drugs in Cecil County (n=45)

Are you generally able to access as many syringes as you need?

- Yes: 40%
- No: 53%
- Depends: 7%

- Average number of times respondents inject drugs per day = 3 times
- Average number of syringes respondents use per day = 2 syringes
- Approximate average time survey respondents reuse the same syringe = 8 days
- Approximate average number of times survey respondents reuse the same syringe = 12+ times
Reused Syringe Needle

Average number of times survey respondents have treated their wounds resulting from injection drug use = 3 times
Survey of People Who Use Injection Drugs in Cecil County (n=45)

Why do you reuse the same syringe?

- “lack of supplies”
- “lack of availability”
- “they are expensive and hard to access”
- “no access to new ones”
- “no choice”
- “can’t get another one”
- “hard to access”
- “can’t afford to get another one”
- “shortage of supply”
- “not accessible”
Survey of People Who Use Injection Drugs in Cecil County (n=45)

Are syringes being disposed of in public spaces? If yes, where?

- Yes
- No

- Trash cans
- Sidewalks
- Parks
- Schoolyards
- Streets
- Woods
- Bathrooms
- Trails
- Parking lots
- Campsites
- Hospital
- Route 40
- McDonald’s, Big Elk Mall, Royal Farms
Survey of People Who Use Injection Drugs in Cecil County (n=45)

If you were using an SSP, how frequently would you access new syringes?

- 73% always
- 18% very often
- 7% sometimes
- 0% rarely
- 2% never

If you were using an SSP, how frequently would you return used syringes?

- 86% always
- 7% very often
- 5% sometimes
- 0% rarely
- 2% never
Survey of People Who Use Injection Drugs in Cecil County (n=45)

- Average number of times respondents sought treatment for injection drug use in the last year = 1 time

- Average number of times respondents sought treatment for injection drug use total = 3 times

- Obstacles faced while seeking treatment included lack of availability in treatment program, finances, transportation, and not knowing how to navigate the system.
Survey of People Who Use Injection Drugs in Cecil County (n=45)

- Average number of times respondents have overdosed in the last year = 1 times
- Average number of times respondents have overdosed total = 2.3 times
- Average number of times respondents have been administered naloxone = 1.5 times, most by friends
- Average number of times respondents administered naloxone to someone = 2 times, mostly to friends
Next Steps

- Present data analysis to local stakeholders
- Write proposal for a comprehensive harm reduction program in Cecil County
- Facilitate proposal presentations to community stakeholders
- Conduct outreach to key partners
- Complete Maryland Department of Health application for implementation
Questions?
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