

February 9, 2010

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Director
Centers for Disease Control
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Frieden:

In anticipation of the repeal of the ban on the use of federal funds for syringe exchange programming, in August 2009, a group of syringe exchange experts met to discuss this approach to disease prevention. The goal of the meeting was to achieve consensus on the characteristics of syringe exchange programs (SEPs) that maximize their likelihood of reducing injection-related morbidity and mortality among injection drug users. The enclosed report organizes and summarizes findings from this meeting. We hope CDC will find this report useful as you develop federal guidance and standards for syringe exchange programs.

The report presents best practice standards for SEP operation, SEP data collection and evaluation, and structural recommendations to improve SEP implementation. It concludes with suggestions for further policy and research approaches that will support and expand the evidence for syringe provision programming in the US.

We are pleased and hopeful for the new opportunities afforded by repeal of the federal funding ban on syringe exchange. Federal leadership can ensure that syringe exchange support, development, and expansion will be thoughtful and effective, and we believe this report can serve your efforts in this regard.

Sincerely,

Ricky Bluthenthal, RAND Corporation and California State University Dominguez Hills
Allan Clear, Harm Reduction Coalition
Don Des Jarlais, Beth Israel Medical Center, Chemical Dependency Institute
Samuel R. Friedman, National Development Research Institutes, Inc.
Donald Grove, Independent
Holly Hagan, New York University School of Nursing
Robert Heimer, Yale University, School of Public Health
Daliah Heller, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Alex Kral, Research Triangle Institute International and University of California at San Francisco
Susan Sherman, Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health
Robert Tolbert, VOCAL NY Users Union