



KAREN L. SMITH, MD, MPH
Director and State Public Health Officer

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
California Department of Public Health



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor

February 11, 2016

TO: ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION OF THE ORANGE COUNTY NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The California Department of Public Health, Office of AIDS (CDPH/OA) announces the authorization of the Orange County Needle Exchange Program (OCNEP) for a period of two years at the Santa Ana Civic Center in Santa Ana, California. Authorization is effective February 11, 2016 through February 11, 2018 and is subject to renewal at the end of the two-year certification period following consultation with local law enforcement officials and the local health officer.

CDPH/OA has determined that the OCNEP has met the requirements outlined in California Health and Safety (H&S) Code Section 121349 to qualify for authorization. Additionally, CDPH/OA has determined that conditions exist for the rapid spread of HIV, viral hepatitis, or other blood-borne diseases in Orange County. Injection drug use is the second-most common mode of transmission of HIV, and the most common mode of transmission of hepatitis C. There is significantly less access to sterile syringes in Orange County than in other California counties of comparable size, and there is evidence of a sizeable population of injection drug users in Orange County who are reusing and sharing potentially contaminated injection equipment due to scarce supply of sterile needles and syringes.

CDPH/OA received 100 public comments regarding the application; all were in support of the application and included comments demonstrating a need among Orange County residents for access to sterile syringes. Comments of support were received from the community, public health, medical, social service, drug treatment and hospital sectors that felt that the program will be a valuable service that would improve community health and safety.

Additionally, CDPH was charged by Governor Brown to administer the syringe exchange program (SEP) certification in “a constrained way,” by working closely with health officers, police chiefs and neighborhood associations. In his signing letter enacting Assembly Bill (AB) 604 (Skinner, Chapter 744, Statutes of 2011), Governor Brown stated that when the program was implemented it would both reduce the spread of communicable diseases and would “respect...local preferences.” The City of Santa

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Ana chief of police, the representative of the local neighborhood association, and the Orange County public health officer do not oppose the location and authorization of OCNEP.

California Code of Regulations requires that certified SEPs record both positive and adverse incidents and maintain a community relations plan that addresses community reports of such incidents. CDPH/OA-certified programs must also document the steps they take to address any reasonable concerns. CDPH/OA has directed OCNEP to document incidents, concerns and positive feedback and we will closely monitor the steps OCNEP takes to address concerns.

CDPH/OA's goal is to ensure that both SEP clients and the SEP's hosting community benefit from the program. CDPH appreciates the time, energy and dedication of the individuals involved in developing the proposal, and those who provided input on this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Karen L. Smith".

Karen L. Smith, MD, MPH
Director and State Public Health Officer