

Becoming a harm reduction distribution agency in Toronto - information session

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Overview

- ▣ **Brief backgrounder Harm Reduction**
 - The Works and harm reduction distribution in Toronto
- ▣ **Process for becoming a harm reduction agency**
 - Readiness activities and assessment
 - Commitments as a harm reduction agency
 - Contract requirements
 - Priority indicators

Harm Reduction

...a range of practical strategies and ideas focused on reducing the harmful consequences associated with drug use...

NOTHING
ABOUT
US
WITHOUT
US



...also a social justice movement built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.

- adapted from Harm Reduction Coalition

Benefits of Harm Reduction

- **Reduces** hepatitis & HIV rates
- **Reduces** overdose deaths & other early deaths among PWUDs
- **Reduces** public injection & reduces the number of used needles in public
- **Reduces** the sharing of needles & other substance use equipment
- **Reduces** crime & increase employment among PWUDs
- **Educates** about safer injecting and smoking & reduce the frequency of use
- **Educates** about safer sex and sexual health & increase condom use
- **Increases** referrals to treatment programs & health and social services

Adapted from British Columbia Centre for Communicable Disease Control website
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/harm-reduction>

Harm reduction strategies



- Needle distribution/return programs
- Opiate Substitution therapies
- Accessible testing for communicable diseases
- Accessible and targeted vaccination programs
- Take home naloxone program
- Supervised consumption facilities
- Outreach and education services
- Peer support programs

Supply Distribution in Ontario



- The **Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Program** provides harm reduction supplies, educational materials and knowledge translation & exchange opportunities to Needle Syringe Programs across Ontario.
- All 36 regional Public Health Units in Ontario, plus ~180 satellite locations provide sterile, single-use injection equipment to PWUDs
- Toronto supplies funneled through The Works
 - TPH: needles, sharps bins, local print materials
 - OHRDP: all other safer injection supplies & crack use supplies

Basics of Best Practices

- ▣ Highest (finest) gauge & attached needle, if possible
- ▣ Provide sterile needles (attached, tips and syringes) in quantities requested by client
- ▣ Do not limit the number of needles/syringes
- ▣ Encourage the return of used needles/syringes
- ▣ Educate clients about the risks of re-using and sharing

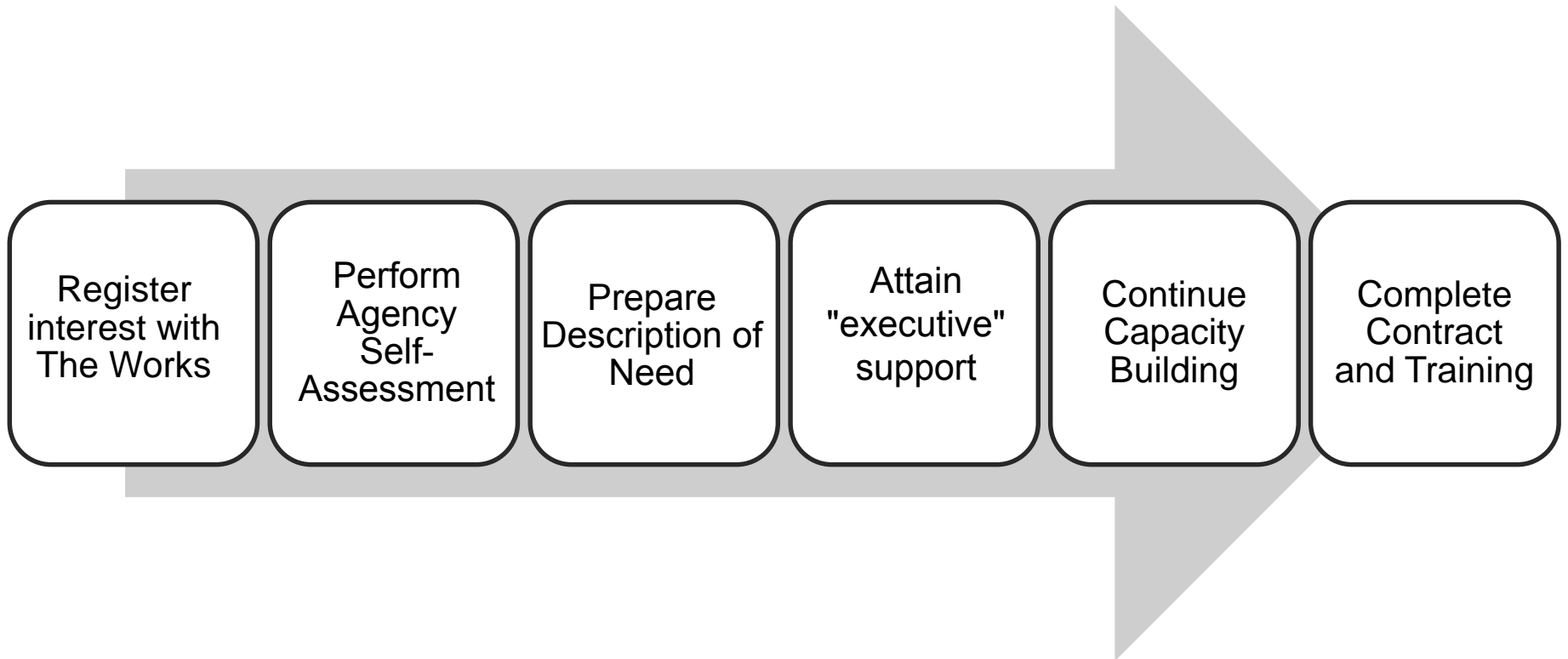
What it means to be an “agency”

- Commitments are philosophical and contractual
 - ❑ Provide safer drug use equipment to clients
 - ❑ Use a Harm Reduction Approach to services
 - ❑ Be non-judgemental: support, counsel, educate, referral
 - ❑ Ensure all staff are trained
 - ❑ Ensure protocols are followed
 - ❑ Arrange appropriate disposal of all used equipment
 - ❑ (Require all staff to) report percutaneous injuries
 - ❑ Encourage Hep B and other immunizations up to date
 - ❑ Ensure all staff follow protocols re: police involvement with distribution program and report to The Works Manager

The Works' responsibilities

- Provide free needles/syringes and other HR equipment in a timely manner
- Guarantee safety standard of glass stems
- Provide pertinent reports, data, consultation support, etc. relevant to HR services
- Provide database for safer drug use services

The process for becoming an “agency”



Perform Agency Self-Assessment

- ▣ Do service users use drugs? How do we know?
- ▣ What substances do clients use? How do they use?
- ▣ Do service users request safer drug use supplies?
- ▣ How do staff, management, and directorship “feel” about harm reduction? Does it align with our vision/mission/values or could it be incorporated? What will it take to get everyone aligned?
- ▣ Are there staff “champions” to help support/lead the undertaking? Do we have or have the capacity for meaningful peer involvement?
- ▣ Can we commit to continued HR capacity building and quality assurance? Protocol development?
- ▣ Logistics: where to keep supplies? Where to distribute? Sharps?

Prepare Description of Need

- ▣ **Agency profile:** services provided, population focus, location(s), service hours (including when HR supplies would be distributed), catchment, etc.
- ▣ **Highlight self assessment**
- ▣ **Speak to priority indicators:** agency and population characteristics that will help TPH to meet health equity goals and optimize coverage of harm reduction across the city

Priority Indicators

▣ Need

- Drug use indicators, requests for HR supplies

▣ Readiness

- Demonstrated capacity building
- Documented commitment from decision-maker(s)

▣ Location(s)

- Periphery (Scarborough, Etobicoke, Rexdale), multiple

▣ Distribution Capacity

- Mobile, 24h, “non-normy hours,”
- Peer workers

▣ Population

- Women, indigenous people, youth, LGBTQ2S and intersecting

▣ Service Category

- Shelter, drop-in

Attain “executive” support

- ▣ Pitch the Board, Executive Director or whichever appropriate authorizing entity
- ▣ Their “sponsorship” will be imperative to the success of your program
- ▣ If commitment ever waivers, you will have documented commitment



Register interest with The Works

- Contact The Works
 - Discuss/submit description of need
 - Submit documentation of board/ED support
 - Discuss opportunities for capacity building
 - Connect with harm reduction community
 - Discuss timeline for coming onboard

Continue Capacity Building

- Get on the listserv and read the Needle Exchange Coordinating Committee (NECC) weekly digest emails
- Access NECC Harm Reduction Drop Box
- Connect with community mentors/resources
- Arrange trainings: harm reduction, trauma-informed care, blood-borne and sexually transmitted infections, etc.
- Refer service users to harm reduction distribution programs and The Works Van
- Refer services users to The Works' >POINT for free naloxone

Complete Contract and Training

■ Mail to The Works

- 3 signed copies of agreement for the provision of HR supplies between your agency and the City of Toronto
- Signed “Declaration of a Non-Discrimination Policy”
- Copy of your agency’s Insurance Certificate

■ Receive from The Works

- Copy of fully operable contract
- City of Toronto Certificate of Insurance

■ Arrange initial training: harm reduction, supply distribution, ordering, neo (online reporting system)

■ Begin distribution and loop in to the NEP community

Roles and Responsibilities of The Works and Contracted Agencies

■ The Works

- As needed support, consultation, training
- Resource sharing, knowledge translation
- Community mobilization and connection

■ Your Agency

- Build and maintain harm reduction approach
- Distribute safer drug use supplies, education, referrals
- Ask for support as needed
- Timely reporting
- Participation in NECC community

Thank you!

