

**Best Practices for disposal and handling of used injection equipment**

Below are recommended best practice policies for needle syringe programs (NSPs) and other harm reduction programs to facilitate disposal of used injection equipment and non-injection equipment:

- Regular review and assessment of compliance with local, provincial/territorial and federal regulations regarding collection, storage, transportation, security and disposal of biomedical waste
- Educate clients and staff members on how to properly handle, secure and dispose of used injection and non-injection equipment
- Encourage clients to return and/or properly dispose of used injection and non-injection equipment
- Provide clients with tamper resistant sharps containers in a variety of sizes
- Provide multiple, convenient locations for safe disposal of used equipment in rural and urban settings.
- Do not penalize or refuse to provide new equipment to clients who fail to return used drug equipment. Evidence shows that strict exchange policies, such as “one-for-one” are neither necessary nor desirable to achieve high return rates
- Visually estimate the amount of returned equipment; staff should not touch used equipment and neither staff nor clients should manually count used equipment
- Encourage staff and clients to be vaccinated against hepatitis B
- Provide access to safety devices for staff and procedures for first aid and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)

**Strategies to encourage proper disposal**

Several strategies have been suggested within the research literature to increase proper disposal:

- providing multiple locations for return and disposal of equipment
- increased hours of operation of NSPs and other harm reduction programs
- conducting visits to retrieve biohazard bins and syringes from homes and drug use spaces
- installing public disposal boxes
- encouraging pharmacy disposal
- conducting community clean ups
- providing spaces for people who use drugs

Reference:

Working Group on Best Practice for Harm Reduction Programs in Canada. (2013). *Best Practice Recommendations for Canadian Harm Reduction Programs that Provide Service to People Who Use Drugs and are at Risk for HIV, HCV, and Other Harms: Part 1.*

Retrieved from: <http://www.catie.ca/sites/default/files/bestpractice-harmreduction.pdf>