



City and County of San Francisco
 Edwin M. Lee
 Mayor

San Francisco Department of Public Health
 Barbara A. Garcia, MPA
 Director of Health

SF Safe Injection Services Task Force Minutes

Thursday, August 10th, 2017 @ 9am-11am
 25 Van Ness Ave, Room 610

1. DIRECTOR'S WELCOME, REMARKS, & AGENDA REVIEW

Director Barbara Garcia, of the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH), opened the Safe Injection Services (SIS) Task Force meeting and welcomed members.

The following table summarizes the present Task Force members and their affiliation:

Name	Affiliation
Holly Bradford	San Francisco Drug Users Union
Lydia Bransten	St. Anthony's
Emily Cohen	Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing
Lt. Troy Dangerfield	San Francisco Police Department
Mike Discepola	San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Vitka Eisen	HealthRight 360
Barbara Garcia	Chair, San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH)
Isaac Jackson	Urban Survivors Union
Wilma Long	Homeless Outreach Team
Paula Lum	University of California, San Francisco
Laura Thomas	Drug Policy Alliance
Barry Zevin	San Francisco Department of Public Health

Director Garcia shared her experiences visiting Insite in Vancouver, and observed that what they face is congruent with the opioid crisis in the US. Insite employs a Four Pillars approach and has begun implementing pop-up services to reach people in more secluded places like alleyways. The Vancouver Police Department is actively engaged with Insite in implementing public safety strategies. They recognize that people are accessing fentanyl through the mail, so they will need to direct their efforts on the drug distribution chain rather than on sellers. She noted that Vancouver's government is also exploring providing heroin due to the rise of fentanyl poisonings.

The experience emphasized the importance of prevention efforts, and, San Francisco will also need to think about drug contamination and poisonings moving forward. Thus, Director Garcia will direct her staff to develop a fentanyl surveillance system for DPH. She noted that San Francisco is fortunate to have a strong treatment system and system of care.

Colleen Chawla, DPH, reviewed the Task Force purpose, timeline of topics, and milestones. The focus of this meeting is to discuss draft policy recommendations for operations and services and considerations for location and siting. DPH anticipates the Task Force's final report will be released in September with an opportunity for the Task Force and public comment to provide comments before sending it to the Board of Supervisors.

DRAFT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: OPERATIONS & SERVICES

Eileen Loughran, DPH, shared the draft policy recommendations for operations and services based on input from the Task Force, community surveys, focus groups, research literature, and public comment.

Task Force feedback included:

- expanding recommendation #6 to include engagement with people who consume drugs through methods other than injection;
- developing a public-focused educational component and resource about SIS that also seeks to address stigma towards drug users;
- modifying recommendation #8 to mention San Francisco's role in supporting programs that face legal repercussions of participating or operating in SIS; and
- incorporating a specific recommendation that targets the needs of special populations.

Feedback from the Task Force will be incorporated before the recommendations are finalized and included in the final report to the Mayor's Office and Board of Supervisors. For more information, refer to the Meeting 3 Presentation Slides on the [Safe Injection Services Task Force website](#).

2. OVERVIEW OF SURVEYS & FOCUS GROUPS

Colleen shared a summary of the themes and findings from surveys and focus groups with people in early recovery, business owners, neighborhood groups, and San Francisco residents. For more information, refer to the Meeting 3 Presentation Slides on the [Safe Injection Services Task Force website](#).

3. DISCUSSION: LOCATION & SITING

Task Force members responded to DPH's considerations for location and siting of SIS services, and the themes are summarized below:

- Public safety is important, and it is essential to fully engage and partner with local law enforcement, probation, and parole agencies to determine public safety priorities and strategies.
- The concerns voiced by San Franciscans are commonly shared with other cities that have implemented or explored safe injection services. San Francisco is positioned to address those concerns by leveraging evidence-based models and strategies that already exist.
- Partner with existing organizations that currently provide services to people who inject drugs, and initiate small-scale integrated safe injection sites that are able to expand over time while remaining flexible to emerging needs.
- San Francisco is an innovative public health leader, and there is great urgency to move forward with operating safe injection services in the City. The recently released study on an unsanctioned site in the US provides insight on the efficacy of these services, and a sanctioned site could have even more profound and broader impacts on the health and well-being of all San Franciscans.
- While there is opposition to safe injection services in San Francisco, substantial community support exists for operating multiple safe injection service sites throughout the City, particularly in neighborhoods where public drug use, overdoses, and improperly discarded syringes most often occur.

- There is increasing urgency to address injection drug use and deaths due to overdose, and determining a location for safe injection services will present a significant challenge moving forward.
- Ensure planning and implementation of SIS integrates clear metrics and practices for data collection, evaluation, and monitoring to facilitate ongoing quality improvement processes.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jennifer Kiss, speaking on behalf of the St. Francis Foundation, shared her support for the draft recommendations and implementation of safe injection services. She shared a brief history of the Tenderloin Task Force and its work on the Four Pillar-informed *Safer Inside* recommendations report produced by the Task Force.

Valerie Rose stated the Tenderloin Task Force developed the *Safer Inside* operational plan for safe injection services in the Tenderloin based on the AB186 framework and modeled after Vancouver's Insite facilities. In addition to the Four Pillars, the *Safer Inside* report includes evaluation and monitoring components centralized and non-centralized delivery models.

Steve Gibson shared that he has not yet taken a formal position on SIS, and he is gathering more information before making a decision in the fall. He stated that he and his associates have picked up thousands of syringes on the street, and he has personally witnessed public use during his commute to work. Public injection drug use is an urgent issue for all San Francisco that must be addressed. He then read statement from Simon Lewis recognizing public health impacts of this issue and his support for SIS.

Terry Morris shared about her history of substance use and her friend's experiences with using drugs as a teen to cope with difficult life events. Her friend's drug use increased over time and resulted in homelessness. Because she knew the dangers of injecting drugs alone, she paid others to use their space and – on one occasion – was sexually assaulted. Ms. Morris wanted to raise the issue of safety for women who inject drugs, and the added dangers they face. Having a safe injection facility would have a significant and positive impact.

Abbie Yant acknowledged the significant amount of opposition during the Tenderloin Task Force's process and wanted to note the array of organizations that have collaborated on the *Safer Inside* report. She observed numerous people undergoing a transformation in their perspectives as they went through their process. She expressed her delight in the Task Force's recommendations and their alignment with the Tenderloin Task Force's. She recognized the need in the Tenderloin neighborhood and in San Francisco overall and urged ways to continue engaging other communities throughout the city.

Brother Dick Tandy emphasized the need to focus on the dignity of the human person. He supports and advocates for a safe place for people to inject drugs. He shared about his two friends who died of overdoses and that we all have all been affected by someone overdosing on drugs. If we can develop a safe, clean, and controlled environment for our loved ones to inject, it would be a very human thing to do.

Rena Bransten stated that she is aware of the problems associated with injection drug use, and whatever decisions are made in response must be accompanied by informing the public the best way possible.

Patricia Bransten shared her experience with her daughter's substance use disorder, including multiple overdoses that required Narcan, many nights in police stations and hospitals, the compassionate treatment by law enforcement officers, and poor treatment by health care professionals. Ms. Bransten wanted to remind people what it looks like for people without safe injection facilities, and urged support for operating them.

Gloria Rogan shared that she has concerns about safe injection programs and is skeptical of the Task Force's process, including the number of people involved in the surveys and focus groups. She stated that the process has not thoroughly taken into account the opinions of more San Franciscans. Ms. Rogan stated she believes having SIS is acceptable as long as people obtain their drugs legally. Because of the number of crimes and property damage, she encouraged more funding and resources to SFPD to prevent crimes and enforce existing laws.

Ben Lintschinger shared his support for SIS and that they provide a place that people can go and feel safe about their health issues. When he visited Vancouver's Insite, he experienced shock in the differences of people's feelings of self-value when they were using SIS versus those that did not. He saw the positive impact of SIS for people with autism, other disabilities, and their families when there are services for people experiencing difficulty.

Alexandra Goldman shared her support for SIS in San Francisco and also in the Tenderloin. She cited data indicating where most overdoses in public spaces are occurring and that people often do not travel very far to access treatment services. So, it makes sense to locate at least one SIS facility in the Tenderloin. Ms. Goldman emphasized the importance of how SIS would reduce stigma, and the major influence that stigma has in discouraging users from seeking services or treatment. She is moved and heartened that San Francisco is saying that people who use drugs matter.

Noni Richen stated she lives near a methadone clinic in the Western Addition. She noted that at the last meeting, someone expressed concern about lines forming outside a SIS facility. Ms. Richen commented that lines form outside other types of venues such as restaurants, and they make an effort to contain them. She urged that the community continue to listen respectfully even if there is disagreement. She added that drug sellers are a primary driver of societal ills as they prey on people, and there should be zero tolerance afforded to them.

Shannon Knox stated that bathrooms are currently injection facilities in San Francisco. She shared a story about one of her clients who overdosed in a bathroom at Bloomingdale's. He was with his friend who had Narcan, but because security personnel handcuffed him, he was not able to administer Narcan and Ms. Knox's client died. Ms. Knox urged training for a wide range of people to administer Narcan in order to share the responsibility.

Erica Sandberg stated that the details are critical regarding a program like SIS. She encouraged more conversations on how SIS would be managed, including mitigating criminal activity in the surrounding areas. Ms. Sandberg referenced a journal article about Vancouver's Insite model, and noted that while it praised the efficacy of SIS, crime continued to be an issue for the surrounding areas. She mentioned the article states that Vancouver significantly increased its police presence right around the facility, and inquired where San Francisco was going to get the personnel and resources to reach this type of security presence.

Taeko Frost reiterated the Harm Reduction Coalition's support for SIS. She pointed out that there is a transformation in providers and service users when there are needed services and opportunities to build relationships in a supervised space. There is also a transformation for people when they do not have to worry about where to inject and if they will die alone. She stated the Harm Reduction Coalition is committed to supporting the staff at a SIS site when and if they operate.

Sebastian Paine shared his personal experiences with attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings with his parents and being a part of the recovery community since childhood. He added that his friend died of an overdose, and because he was alone he was not found for over a day. Mr. Paine stated that it is important to have a space for people to use drugs, and disagrees with the concern that people would not use SIS because people do not want to die. He pointed out that potential cost savings of SIS could pay for increased police officers and other services. He also stated that community opposition diminishes every time the topic is discussed and encouraged that the City continue doing so.

Nick Byers stated the lack of SIS reinforces societal power structures and their resulting racial disparities. Addressing only injection drugs further magnifies disparities and marginalizes those that have been targeted by US drug policies.

He stated that if San Francisco only sets up SIS where public drug use is most prevalent, it will only perpetuate the existing problems.

Jackson Bowman advocated for services geared towards the needs of transitional-aged youth (TAY). While there are similarities among best practices for particular demographics, he urged that San Francisco consider 24/7 services, on-demand access, and recruiting staff with specific experience working with TAY. Because training is not provided to staff on working with age groups, it may limit the impact and reach of existing services. He also supported the idea of “any door is the right door” with access to wraparound services and case management. Despite being a popular tourist destination, he shared his support for locating SIS in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood as a prime location to serve PWID.

Sarah Jacobs stated that having multiple SIS locations is important because of the body’s inability to properly metabolize a drug if the person consumes in a novel environment. The lack of familiar cues leads the body to process the drug in a way that results in a higher risk for overdose.

Mary Howe stated she fully supports SIS. In addition to addressing drug use, she stressed the need to treat the whole person, and it is critical to have a facility with integrated services that allows people to inject drugs safely. She shared that the entire community can do a better job of addressing stigma with people when they are honest about their drug use and needs.

Martha Stein emphasized the need to reduce stigma towards drug users and to continue building greater community. She commended the Task Force on their work and the process undertaken around this topic. She acknowledged the difficulty around coordinating and collaborating with numerous organizations and agencies, and she looks forward to opportunities she can contribute to the process moving forward.

6. CLOSING COMMENTS & NEXT STEPS

Draft policy recommendations will be updated and sent to the Task Force for comments to finalize in August. The recommendations will be included in the final report and submitted to the Mayor’s Office and Board of Supervisors in September 2017. For more information and updates, visit the [Safe Injection Services Task Force website](#).