



City and County of San Francisco
Mark Farrell
Mayor

San Francisco Department of Public Health

Barbara A. Garcia, MPA
Director of Health

Office of Policy and Planning

MEMORANDUM

January 30th, 2018

To: Edward Chow, MD, President, and Members of the Health Commission

Through: Barbara A. Garcia, MPA, Director of Health

Through: Sneha Patil, Acting Director, Office of Policy and Planning

From: Patrick Chang, Senior Health Program Planner, Office of Policy and Planning

Re: Resolution Endorsing the San Francisco Safe Injection Services Task Force Final Report and Recommendations

In response to your request at the November 7, 2017 Health Commission meeting, attached please find for your consideration a Resolution Endorsing the San Francisco Safe Injection Services Task Force Final Report and Recommendations.

The recommendations are included for your reference in Attachment A to this memo, and the full final report with recommendations can be found online at <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/files/SISTaskforce/SIS-Task-Force-Final-Report-2017.pdf>.

Safe Injection Services Task Force Recommendations

1. Support creation of safe injection services in San Francisco.

The Task Force's overarching recommendation is to support the operation of safe injection services in San Francisco. The rise in public injection drug use and its harmful public health and safety outcomes has long reached critical mass in the City, and this urgency is commonly felt by members of the Task Force and San Francisco residents alike. Research consistently demonstrates that safe injection services are an evidenced-based harm reduction strategy that can address this public health issue.

PROGRAM PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

2. Recognize legal and real estate barriers to operating safe injection services and devise necessary contingency plans.

The possession of controlled substances – unless the possession is with the prescription of a licensed health professional – is prohibited by both state and federal law. State and federal law also prohibits building owners and operators from allowing the manufacture, storage, or distribution of a controlled substance, and criminal and civil penalties may be imposed on all parties engaged in the property. San Francisco must continue advocating for the passage of Assembly Bill 186 during the 2018 legislative session – which would allow some counties to operate safe injection sites according to specific requirements. In order to proceed with operating safe injection services, San Francisco must be deliberate in formulating a way forward for local agencies, community organizations, and building owners that includes local protections and procedures to respond to potential legal repercussions.

3. Conduct an assessment to determine the optimal service scale, site requirements, capacity, work flow, hours of operation, and staffing mix.

In order to properly implement safe injection services in a potential area, a thorough assessment must be completed to gauge the demand for services, needed capacity, and necessary operational components to ready a site and staff to operate successfully. Preparing the right scope and size of a site is essential to supporting people who inject drugs, managing client flow, and optimizing the benefits to the surrounding area.

4. Design safe injection services as a safe, clean, and welcoming space for people who inject drugs.

Safe injection services are an opportunity to affirm the humanity and dignity of people who inject drugs, and the space must reflect these values in providing compassionate care and services. A hospitable and hygienic place that reduces the stigma and inherent dangers of

public drug use will be more successful in building trust, creating engagement, disseminating safer drug use practices, linking persons who use drugs to treatment, and improving health outcomes.

- 5. Pilot small-scale integrated safe injection sites that can be flexible to emerging needs.**
Allow for agility and flexibility at the onset of assessing and planning for a safe injection site. While a site may begin operating at a smaller scale, anticipate opportunities to modify the scope and size of a site depending on emerging trends and the needs of people who inject drugs and stakeholders in the surrounding community.

- 6. Ensure planning and implementation of safe injection services integrates clear program goals and metrics, including defined practices for data collection, monitoring, and evaluation to facilitate ongoing quality improvement processes.**
Develop an evaluation plan with clear goals and objectives to measure the success of any safe injection services. It is critical to build in reliable data collection procedures that support active monitoring, evaluation and quality improvement efforts. Maintain transparency with the public about the progress and impact of safe injection services in order to address concerns that may arise.

MODEL

- 7. Support an integrated model that includes on-site services and linkages to other services.**
An integrated model is generally the best fit for San Francisco's population and existing system of care. It is consistent with DPH's overall model and approach to connected services which can optimize access to other important health and social services, linkages to substance use treatment services, and coordinating care for persons with complex medical conditions.

- 8. Incorporate a peer component in the staffing model.**
Research and feedback from people who inject drugs demonstrate the value of incorporating people who currently or formerly inject drugs in staffing safe injection services. In addition to expressed preferences by some people who inject drugs, peer staff are uniquely positioned to enhance the benefits of safe injection services by engaging those who encounter similar social and structural barriers to accessing sanctioned services. Harnessing their relationships with people who inject drugs and familiarity with experiences represents one of the most promising ways to leverage peer networks and community expertise in addressing opioid drug use.

9. Consider expanding the types of drug consumption allowed on-site.

Individuals that consume drugs by other routes experience health disparities similar to people who inject drugs. While injection drug use is the primary focus at this time, future considerations should explore expanding the types of drug consumption allowed at harm reduction service sites.

LOCATION

10. Operate multiple sites throughout San Francisco.

San Francisco would be best served by operating multiple safe injection service sites in neighborhoods where public injection drug use, overdoses, and improperly discarded syringes most often occur. Having various sites would enable a distribution of capacity and greater penetration of services where people who inject drugs are most likely to be.

11. Locate safe injection services where drug use most often occurs.

Safe injection services should be located near where public injection drug use most often occurs to best ensure they are used by the target population. Locating services in these areas can offer the greatest benefit to the surrounding communities by preventing improperly discarded needles, public overdoses, and other health and safety advantages.

12. Locate safe injection services where existing services are delivered to people who inject drugs.

Operating safe injection services where people who inject drugs already receive services can better ensure that safe injection services are administered by service providers that have developed trusted relationships with people who inject drugs. This level of engagement can increase the likelihood that safe injection services are utilized and achieve success in linking people who inject drugs with treatment and other services.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION

13. Engage the public throughout the planning process to optimize the usage and benefits of safe injection services to the surrounding community, including:

- people who inject drugs
- stakeholders from potential neighborhoods
- business owners
- neighborhood groups
- San Francisco residents

Planning for safe injection services must acknowledge a diverse set of community opinions. It is crucial to engage residents and businesses in prospective neighborhoods throughout the planning process to develop common goals and objectives, troubleshoot concerns, and establish feedback loops for evaluation. Mechanisms for ongoing public input, outreach,

and education are vital to ensuring that the surrounding community has a voice and constructive role in designing and supporting the site. Importantly, the perspectives of people who inject drugs must be incorporated to ensure the services are used and accomplish their purpose.

14. Engage law enforcement, probation, and parole agencies to determine public safety priorities and strategies.

These agencies must be fully engaged at all stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation to arrive at the careful balance of securing public safety while providing safe injection services. Their involvement is critical in shaping the successful integration of safe injection services in various communities.

15. Partner with other city agencies and community organizations to develop collaborative, comprehensive, and sustainable harm reduction strategies.

To meaningfully address injection drug use in San Francisco and the impairment and distress that results requires robust and earnest collaboration across government agencies and community-based organizations. It is key that all parties commit to: sustaining funding and resources; cultivating cooperative and accountable relationships; establishing clear roles and responsibilities; and equipping their personnel with complementary, appropriate, and ongoing training.

16. Develop a public-focused central information source and education campaign on the benefits of safe injection services that also seeks to address stigma toward people who use drugs.

Commit resources to outreach and educating the public on the purpose and goals of safe injection services, including their role as part of San Francisco's continuum of harm reduction services and as a pathway to recovery for those seeking treatment. Such a campaign can serve to reduce stigma toward people who use drugs and facilitate engagement with communities to foster a supportive environment for a successful program. The campaign should engage televised, audio, online, and social media formats, and leverage presentations at community meetings, social service organizations, neighborhood associations, and other local gatherings. The City should establish a corresponding publicly-accessible and central information source that provides accurate and current information on harm reduction and substance use treatment services.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

17. Identify and commit resources for special populations that face health disparities, barriers to services, and/or risk for experiencing violence related to drug use, including, but not limited to:

- **people of color**
- **women**
- **transitional age youth**
- **people experiencing homelessness**
- **LGBTQI**
- **people in the sex trade**
- **recently/formerly incarcerated people**

It is important to identify the barriers and threats that members of many communities regularly experience that lead to heightened risks for injury and marginalization. Moreover, it is consistent with San Francisco's enduring history of providing compassionate care and services to extend culturally-appropriate and thoughtful interventions to people who inject drugs who are most vulnerable to harm.

**Health Commission
City and County of San Francisco
Resolution No. 18-1**

Endorsing the San Francisco Safe Injection Services Task Force's Final Report and Recommendations

WHEREAS, Two million Americans suffer from substance use disorders related to prescription opioids, heroin, and synthetics such as fentanyl, and the availability of fentanyl and its poisoning of drug supplies, in particular, poses additional concern due to its ability to heighten the potency and toxic influences of heroin and cocaine when mixed; and

WHEREAS, An estimated 22,500 people inject drugs in San Francisco and approximately 160 to 200 people die in the city each year from a drug overdose; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, San Francisco has continued to see overdoses from heroin, methamphetamine, and fentanyl and increasing attention has been placed on public injection drug use; and

WHEREAS, Drug injection is a known risk factor for opioid overdose, and people who inject drugs have health needs that are of particular concern to public health such as unhealthy substance use, the acquisition and transmission of HIV and hepatitis C, serious physical and mental health conditions, and premature death; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing that addiction is a medical condition, San Francisco operates a continuum of behavioral health care services that range from prevention to treatment services and bases its services in the principles of harm reduction; and

WHEREAS, Safe injection services represent one evidence-based strategy that fits within this harm reduction model, and approximately 100 safe injection sites now operate in over 65 cities around the world; and

WHEREAS, A 2017 study found that a single 13-booth safe injection services site would result in the following each year:

- each dollar spent would generate \$2.33 in savings, for total annual net savings of \$3.5 million;
- 415 fewer hospital stays
- 3.3 fewer HIV cases
- 19 fewer hepatitis C cases
- 110 more people who inject drugs entering treatment
- 1 life saved every four years; and

WHEREAS, State and federal law prohibit individuals from possessing controlled substances without a valid prescription and building owners and operators from allowing the manufacture,

storage, or distribution of a controlled substance, and allows criminal and civil penalties to be imposed on all parties engaged in the property; and

WHEREAS, Assembly Bill 186, which is currently pending in the California Legislature, would allow designated counties, including San Francisco, to operate safe injection sites according to specific requirements and prohibit those involved with the programs from being charged with drug-related crimes; and

WHEREAS, In April 2017, the Board of Supervisors passed resolution 123-17 urging the San Francisco Department of Public Health to convene a Safe Injection Services Task Force to make policy recommendations to the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, and City departments regarding the potential opportunities and obstacles associated with safe injection services, the community need for such services, and the feasibility of opening and operating such services; and

WHEREAS, The Task Force convened three public meetings, between June 2017 and August 2017, and discussed specific focus areas identified by DPH through the review of published literature and reports: types of safe injection service models, operations, services, location, and siting; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the public meetings, the San Francisco Department of Public Health sought a diverse set of perspectives from an array of San Franciscans through:

- a public online survey of more than 500 business owners, neighborhood groups, and residents
- 18 participants in 2 focus groups with business owners, neighborhood groups, and residents
- community survey with 40 people who inject drugs and 96 people in early recovery
- public comment at Task Force meetings; and

WHEREAS, The Task Force developed 17 total recommendations that support the creation of safe injection services in San Francisco, and address the need for legal analyses, program planning and management, delivery model, location considerations, community engagement and education, and identifying special populations; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Supervisors' Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee expressed their full support for the Task Force recommendations and for the Department of Public Health to implement safe injection services in San Francisco;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Health Commission endorses the Safe Injection Services Task Force's recommendations for operating safe injection services in San Francisco; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Health Commission supports Assembly Bill 186; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Health Commission supports the implementation of safe injection services.

I hereby certify that the San Francisco Health Commission adopted this resolution at its meeting of February 6, 2018.

Mark Morewitz, MSW
Health Commission Executive Secretary