

To: All Core Needle Syringe Programs

With Ontario's commitment to "flatten out the curve" of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is always good to be prepared. Please find below a few recommendations from the Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Program (OHRDP).

Prioritize and Prepare

- Continue to follow the lead of your Public Health Unit regarding infection control and stay up-to-date with information: [Ministry of Health](#), [Public Health Ontario](#), [Health Canada](#).
- The harm reduction supply volume through OHRDP is currently healthy and orders from core NSPs are being processed and delivered as usual. As per the existing '[Guidelines for the Management of Harm Reduction Supplies: Key Roles and Responsibilities of Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Program and Ontario's Core Needle Exchange/Syringe Programs](#)', your agency should be prepared to operate for 2 weeks after placing an order in case of any delivery/transportation issues.
- Consider ensuring that a plan is in place to maintain harm reduction services and supply distribution during potential service disruptions and with limited staffing:
 - Service disruption may be inevitable, so make every effort to inform community agencies and your clients about how you plan to ensure access to harm reduction supplies during any service disruption.
 - Do what you can to ensure that your agency maintains its ability to monitor harm reduction supply volumes, is able to place orders for supplies, receive those supplies, and re-stock satellite sites (access points).
 - **OHRDP recommends that programs encourage their clients to take what they need and not to stock pile harm reduction supplies at this time. Stock piling could have a detrimental effect on the availability of supplies long term, should there be any interruption to the supply chain as a result of COVID-19.**
 - Ensure harm reduction supplies have as few hands touching them as possible to help reduce risk of infections, such as COVID-19. Self-serve options for harm reduction supplies may put your clients at greater risk of infection – please consult with your local Public Health Unit/infectious disease specialist about self-serve options and consider alternative methods of distribution (e.g. prepackaged kits and having one staff person handing out supplies on request).
 - Post messages and posters for clients indicating where they can go in your communities to access harm reduction supplies, washrooms, food, clothing, medical care and shelter as many agencies and private establishments have restrictions or are closed.
 - Think about putting systems in place to be able to check-in on individuals if your agency experiences service disruptions.

Key Harm Reduction Tips to Share with Clients

- Don't share or reuse harm reduction supplies or cigarettes.
- Cook your drugs, every time.
- Dispose of used harm reduction supplies into biohazard bins.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, making sure you clean your thumbs, between your fingers, and the backs of your hands. Use hand sanitizer if your hands are not covered with dirt. OHRDP has recently made BZK wipes (benzalkonium chloride antiseptic wipes, a soap and water alternative) available to core NSPs.
- Use tissues to sneeze or cough into and then dispose into the garbage. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into the bend of your elbow. Wash your hands with soap and water (if available) immediately afterwards.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- If you are on OAT, talk to your pharmacist/doctor about carries.
- Try to minimize close contact with other people - this is what is being referred to as "social distancing" in the media, and means standing or sitting at least 6 feet apart from other people.
- Try to hang out with a small consistent group of people to use with.
- Wash your hands with soap and water (or use a BZK wipe) before you prepare your drugs and clean the surface area where you are preparing your drugs.
- If you use alone, test your dope first by using less to lower your chances of an overdose. Ask a friend to check in on you, or have a friend on the phone while you are using. You can also call the **Overdose Prevention Line at 1-888-853-8542** and someone will remain on the phone with you while you use; if you overdose they will call 911.

The Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Program (OHRDP) is a program of the Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC), and as such is unable to provide your agency with any advice or guidance as to how to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discuss plans with your agency's leadership team.

You can contact OHRDP at info@OHRDP.ca or 1.866. 316.2217