Welcome to Prevention Point Philadelphia. This handbook contains our organizational guidelines for site operation and safety for PPP staff and volunteers. Additionally, you can find information about PPP as an organization, about HIV/AIDS, and about drug use. We welcome open dialogues regarding ways to improve operations at the sites however staff and volunteers are expected to adhere to the guidelines laid out in this handbook. This information is designed to prepare staff and volunteers to use a harm reduction approach to serve people who use Prevention Point's programs with confidence.

Prevention Point Philadelphia staff have contributed to the information contained in this book as well as adapting models used by Prevention Point San Francisco, the Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center, and the Chicago Recovery Alliance.

April 26, 2006

Mission Statement

Prevention Point Philadelphia (PPP) is a multi-service public health organization committed to reducing the harm associated with drug use and commercial sex work in Philadelphia. PPP addresses the health and social service needs of Philadelphia’s most underserved populations-injection drug users (IDUs) and sex industry workers- by providing culturally-sensitive, non-judgmental education, advocacy, prevention and care services. Using a community outreach model, PPP meets our clients “where they’re at” operating a client-friendly syringe exchange program that serves over 13,000 registrants, distributes safer injection supplies, condoms, materials about HIV/AIDS and hepatitis prevention and provides HIV testing, referrals to drug treatment, comprehensive health care and social services.

Project History

Prevention Point Philadelphia began syringe exchange operations in North Philadelphia in 1991. At the time, PPP was an underground, grassroots outgrowth of the Philadelphia chapter of ACT UP. PPP was also supported by the Friends Neighborhood Guild. At the time, the possession of syringes was illegal in the City of Philadelphia. In 1992, after lobbying efforts by the members of PPP, Mayor Ed Rendell issued an Executive Order (4-92), legalizing the possession of syringes in Philadelphia, overriding the laws of the Commonwealth which are still in existence. PPP has received funding primarily from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (Coordinating Office for Drug and Alcohol Programs). Other funding sources include the AIDS Fund, the Philadelphia Foundation, the Drug Policy Foundation, the Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, Bristol Myers Squibb, and the Tides Foundation.
Our Commitment to PPP Volunteers

Consistent with our harm reduction model, PPP values and encourages volunteer participation in many aspects of our work. Opportunities include direct service and program provision with our clients, those regarding the SEP are outlined below, and administrative work. We welcome input and creative problem solving on the part of our volunteers. PPP recruits volunteers from the professional and academic communities as well as from the client community. We understand that in addition to hands-on work, the extent to which our volunteers carry their experiences and knowledge of harm reduction and syringe exchange into the mainstream renders them indispensable to the mission of PPP.

Project Objectives and Current SEP Program Areas

Prevention Point is a public health program. Our main objective is to reduce the risk of transmission of HIV, hepatitis and other blood-borne illnesses due to high-risk behaviors such as drug use and commercial sex work. In the course of this work, we attempt to meet several other goals:

- To reduce or stabilize incidence of new cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among the target population by providing information regarding transmission and treatment;
- To provide a bridge to confidential and anonymous HIV testing and counseling;
- To provide a bridge to comprehensive health care;
- To provide a bridge to housing and other social services; and
- To provide a bridge to treatment for addictions by providing information about and referrals to existing programs.

SYRINGE EXCHANGE

We are best known for operating a sterile syringe exchange program (SEP). We currently operate the following six SEP sites:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9-11AM</td>
<td>37th and Brown Streets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>10:30AM-1 PM</td>
<td>13th St. and Washington Ave.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>3-5PM</td>
<td>Somerset and Warnock Streets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>12:30-2:30PM</td>
<td>Front and Tusculum Streets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>10:30AM-12:30PM</td>
<td>3rd St. and Girard Ave.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:30-4PM</td>
<td>10th St. and Fairmount Ave.</td>
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Each of these sites provides new sterile syringes in exchange for used syringes. We collect used syringes in locking "sharps" containers, which are disposed of by a certified medical waste disposal company.

Using a harm reduction approach, where safety and health are our priority, staff and volunteers at the exchange sites discuss safer injection and safer drug use with our clients. Understanding that abstinence may be one in a series of harm reducing goals we connect our clients to detoxification
and treatment upon request. There is free and anonymous HIV testing and counseling at each site. Our social worker provides help with medical benefits and social service referrals. We also provide safer sex materials; and CDC and Health Department literature on HIV, hepatitis, STDs, drug use, and behavioral health.

Our Thursday, Friday and Saturday morning sites include Street-side Health Clinic services offering free primary health care, free family planning services including oral contraceptives and Plan B, pregnancy and STD testing, Hepatitis A and B and flu vaccines provided by residents and medical students from area teaching hospitals.

OUTREACH
Another aspect of the SEP is street outreach to our consumers and the wider community. Much of this outreach takes place in and around Kensington Avenue, from the York-Dauphin SEPTA station to Allegheny Avenue and in North Central Philadelphia. During street outreach, we work to make potential clients aware of our services at the exchange sites and at our Drop-In Center, offering:

- Information on ALL of PPP programs and services
- Information on support groups, HIV testing and counseling, and SEP;
- Drug treatment, medical and social service referrals;
- Safer sex materials; and
- Safer injection materials

We also reach out to the non-client community in nearby North Philadelphia neighborhoods, raising awareness of PPP services, offering safer sex materials, first-aid materials, educating and answering questions about the efficacy of syringe exchange and HIV prevention.

PPP staff and volunteers are also invited to participate in conferences or asked to make presentation to the professional, medical and healthcare related community. These are opportunities to introduce the benefits of syringe exchange and harm reduction to communities that often come into contact with our population and the health complications related to high risk behavior.

DROP-IN CENTER
At the PPP Drop-In Center (166 W. Lehigh Avenue) we offer a safe friendly place for clients to spend down-time, watch movies, participate in enrichment activities, receive harm reduction and prevention education as well as a number of support services. The Center is open 11AM-3PM for drop-ins and provides:

- HIV testing and counseling
- Opportunities for volunteering
- Referrals to services including food, clothing, medical and drug treatment programs
- Social activities
- Showers and laundry services (forthcoming)
- The following weekly groups:
Volunteer Day- Monday 10AM-2PM  
Life Skills- Tuesday 1-2:30PM  
Women’s Support- Wednesday 3-5PM  
Advocacy- Friday 3:30-4:30PM

Harm Reduction

Prevention Point Philadelphia is a harm reduction agency and the services we provide are conceived and delivered through this philosophical framework. This means that we prioritize strategies and services that reduce the harms associated with high-risk behaviors such as drug use and commercial sex work. Although abstinence may be one in a range of harm reducing options, we acknowledge that many people use drugs as a primary coping mechanism and we never seek to remove it without first ensuring that other support systems are in place. We respect and understand that while many users do seek treatment, many do not have the means or desire to abstain. We take a neutral stance regarding drug use, neither condoning or condemning it, rather we are pragmatic in understanding that drug use is a fact of society and that the goals of rigid zero-tolerance policies and the “war on drugs” are unrealistic. A harm reduction philosophy considers the fact that under current drug policies, users are criminalized and marginalized and that most of the harm associated with drug use is related to its prohibition.

We work with our clients to protect themselves from blood-borne infections and other health complications and we empower them to manage their drug use as a means to lower their risks. We also understand that drug users are people who are able to make their own decisions regarding their individual needs and that our priority is to provide humane, non-judgmental, low-threshold access to services and to protect users, their community and loved one’s from HIV and hepatitis.

Protocols and Procedures

It is vital that the following procedures are understood and followed consistently by staff and volunteers. The viability of our project, the lives of the people we serve, and the safety of our staff and volunteers, depend on the professionalism and consistency with which syringe exchange and our ancillary service delivery are conducted.

SITE ACTIVIES
Prevention Point Philadelphia operates syringe exchange sites at specific locations on specific days of the week. The minimum age for receiving syringes is eighteen. Exchange sites are operated by paid staff including the PPP Executive Director and several full- and part-time staff, outreach workers, and volunteers.

PPP will train volunteers in an introduction to HIV/AIDS prevention, safer sex, cultural awareness, data collection, the philosophy of harm reduction, and how to link participants to health and social services. Paid and volunteer staff will receive training about treatment resources within the City of Philadelphia.
As part of PPP's serious commitment to providing a bridge to treatment, the project will provide program participants with information about and referrals to drug treatment, medical care, and any other appropriate services.

PROJECT RECORD KEEPING:
PPP maintains records of the following:
- Number of syringes turned in.
- Number of syringes dispensed.
- Number of participants seen.
- Number of people each participant is exchanging for.
- Number and type of referrals made by staff, volunteers, and collaborating agencies.
- Number of participants seen by HIV counselors and medical staff.
- Demographic information including age, race, and gender of each participant.

Much of this information is made available during the registration process that each participant goes through when they first encounter PPP. The remaining information is collected as we perform exchanges or provide other services. This collection of this information enables PPP to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs.

EXCHANGE PROTOCOL AND SITE PROCEDURES
In order to provide the only legal syringe exchange in the city, it is imperative that our exchange protocol, as authorized by the Coordinating Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs, be strictly followed by all PPP staff and volunteers.

- Only PPP staff and volunteers may distribute syringes and supplies.
- PPP volunteers, clients and interns must be supervised by PPP staff in the building, at outreach sites and on the SHP and SEP vans.
- PPP staff, volunteers, and interns with communicable infections, staphylococcus, colds, flu, open or exposed wounds or lesions may be asked to wear gloves or avoid handling safer injection supplies. If the volunteer poses a risk to the health and safety of clients or staff, the volunteer may not volunteer at the mobile outreach site.
- Before a site begins or before a volunteer begins a task, a PPP staff member should clearly define and supervise tasks being performed by volunteers and interns.
- Volunteers working at sites who wish to exchange syringes and/or get supplies must do so separately from their work as volunteers. Exchanges may be made before they begin their work or after they complete it.
- Volunteers must follow the established SEP exchange protocols for all exchanges including their own.
- When returning 0 or less than 50 syringes, the client receives an amount of syringes equal to what she has returned, plus 10
- When returning more than 50 syringes, the client receives an amount of syringes exactly equal to what she has returned
- Only one exchange per client per site may be administered
- Exchange of syringes can only occur at our 6 scheduled exchange sites, during the
allowed times

- Clients will be asked to place returns, loose or contained in the sharps container and will not be asked to count syringes; it is a potential needle stick hazard and humiliating to our clients.

- We will ask clients to disclose the number of syringes returned and, assuming an honor system, we will accept their report. Staff must remain neutral, and therefore not encourage clients to embellish packages with items other than syringes.

- PPP staff has the right to negotiate a smaller exchange if the inventory at the site will be compromised by any one exchange.

- Clients may not enter the van unless receiving Family Planning or HIV testing and counseling.

- Sites may operate outdoors when the site location and weather permits this.

- No cash donations for PPP may be accepted at the exchange sites.

- No person under the age of 18 may be present at the sites.

- Only SEP staff, non-paid volunteers, the MA Social Worker, Director of Programs and the Executive Director may handle syringes.

- Prevention Point Philadelphia is authorized to distribute the following safer injection supplies:

  - Cookers- disposable metal caps used to mix drugs. It is important to try to use a clean cooker every time, so we give out several to each client. Cookers replace bottle caps and re-used spoons.

  - Alcohol Pads- A single swipe with an alcohol pad before a shot greatly reduces the chance of an infection or abscess. It is important to have a fresh alcohol pad for each injection attempt, not just each needle, so we generally offer multiple alcohol pads per syringe to each client.

  - Antiseptic Wipes- These are hand wipes for clients without access to running water, or clients who may not have access to running water in the settings in which they inject. If it’s not possible for someone to wash their hands before shooting, these wipes are the next best way to clean their hands.

  - Small Cotton Filters- used as filters when drawing a drug solution into a syringe. The cut in street drugs can sometimes contain larger particles or other debris that may clog syringes or veins, but which will not pass through the cotton filter. Cotton filters replace bits of cigarette filters, which tend to be filled of bacteria and can release fiberglass fibers into the syringe, and consequently the vein.

  - Clean Water- Water is used both for mixing shots and cleaning syringes. We give each client two bottles of water so they can keep contaminated rinse water separate from clean mix water. The small bottles are very convenient to carry around and eliminate the need to rely on unreliable water sources. Clean water replaces puddle water and other stagnant water sources, as well as juice, liquor, or other unsafe liquids.

  - Bleach- Bleach is used for cleaning syringes and other injection equipment in the event that it absolutely must be reused. We strongly suggest that equipment not be reused, but if it must be, a person’s own used syringes and equipment can be made clean.
safer by thorough cleaning with bleach. Bleach does kill bacteria and HIV, but DOES NOT affect the HCV virus. Bleach bottles have cleaning instructions printed directly on them.

- **Triple Antibiotic Ointment**- Antibiotic ointment is to be used on injection sites to avoid infection. However, use of too much ointment can make a wound worse by trapping dirt and bacteria at the site.
- **Other First-Aid Supplies**- We give out other first aid and wound care supplies, such as large and small bandaids, 2in x 2in and 4in x 4in gauze pads, wrapping gauze, medical tape, and latex gloves. If a client asks for a large batch of medical supplies, that’s a good time to check in to see if they have a wound or injury that should be referred to the Street-side Health Project or a nearby ER.
- **Safer Sex Supplies**- We give out plain lubricated condoms, flavored condoms, plain and flavored lube packets, dental dams, and the female condom.
- **Many clients like to get a little bit of all the supplies, we tend to make up sets of “everything bags.”** These generally contain enough supplies for one or two people, or for around 30 syringes, including:

  - 20 to 30 alcohol pads
  - 10 to 15 antiseptic pads
  - 2 or 3 cookers
  - 1 or 2 bags of cotton filters
  - 2 or 3 water bottles
  - 1 bleach bottle
  - 2 or three packets of ointment
  - 5 to 10 band-aids

- **Extra supplies may be given to clients upon request.** Due to inventory capacity please observe the following guidelines:
  - Clients receiving 0-2 cases of syringes may receive extra supplies up to 1 box of alcohol pads, 1 box of wipes, 1 box of large and small band aids each, extra cookers, cottons, bleach, water and ointment (no more than 10 packets).
  - Clients receiving more that 2 cases of syringes may receive extra supplies up to 2 boxes of alcohol pads, 2 boxes of wipes, 2 boxes of large and small band aids each, extra cookers, cottons, bleach, water and ointment (no more than 10 packets).
  - If a client requests more supplies they should be referred to an SEP staff person

**SAFETY PROTOCOL**

- Only experienced staff and volunteers will distribute syringes.
- **NEVER** pick up, touch, or handle someone else’s used syringes.
- If an accidental needle stick occurs, alert a staff person immediately so that medical care can be arranged.
- Wear closed toed shoes, not sandals, at all syringe exchange sites. The thicker the material, the better. Long pants, long sleeves, and gloves are also recommended.
- Hazardous waste container lids should **NEVER** be removed.
- Once syringes leave the site, they are to be treated as used, and disposed of in a sharps container.
- Any syringes that have been uncapped, for any reason, should be disposed of in the
The staff person conducting the exchange has the responsibility and authority to resolve any conflict involving number of syringes received or dispensed.

Small personal sharps containers are available at each site for those who exchange syringes for others. Full containers will be counted as fifty used syringes.

Never position yourself or reach between an exchanger and the sharps container. Try to stand or sit behind the sharps container.

Do not pick up anything that a participant drops.

We recommend Hepatitis B vaccines for all volunteers. Please ask staff for a referral or talk to your personal physician about receiving this vaccine.

Avoid physical contact with participants before they have disposed of their used syringes. An accidental needle stick can happen while shaking hands or hugging someone.

Wear rubber gloves while handling bleach, cotton, unwrapped syringes, etc. This will increase your level of safety, and also preserve the cleanliness and sterility of the supplies we provide to our participants.

Pay attention to the cleanliness of the supplies that we distribute. Dust, dirt, and bacteria from our hands can compromise the safety of our participants.

Pay attention to what is going on around you

Slow down and do not allow yourself to be influenced by a client’s sense of urgency; SAFETY COMES FIRST

Street outreach (during which workers and volunteers represent PPP) will only be conducted during PPP hours of operation

PPP staff will let the Director of Programs know about any outreach activity and make contact with the office during street outreach

Street outreach will be conducted in teams of no less than 3 people one of which must be full-time PPP staff however staff members may perform outreach in teams of two.

Syringes will NEVER be distributed during street outreach

Street outreach will take place in “open air” settings where we can reach our population however no outreach worker may enter an unsafe setting (abandoned building, personal residence, speakeasy, any vehicles, etc.)

Outreach workers will never intervene or involve themselves in law enforcement or police related activity (however workers should be aware that their presence on the street may discourage police misconduct.)

Every outreach worker has the right to remove themselves from locations or situations that cause them discomfort

Outreach work will be preceded by and, if necessary, followed by team meetings to clarify goals, message and strategies

Outreach workers represent PPP in the community; this is an important PR opportunity as well as outreach and we need also be mindful of our conduct in public and behave appropriately

Handling Volatile, Potentially Violent Situations:
Occasionally, during a site, a participant may become angry or upset with Prevention Point staff
or volunteers. Often the conflict will involve a participant demanding additional supplies. It is important to remember a few key facts while handling conflict.

- Getting angry generally escalates an already tense situation. Stay Calm!
- In most situations we want to avoid an argument; state boundaries and limits consistently and using a low speaking tone
- It is our responsibility to manage our own emotions and actions, we cannot control those of our clients
- Work to strike a balance between following our protocol and reducing the use of “NO” to a minimum
- Staff and volunteers are expected to support each other, while never appearing to “gang up” on a client
- Nothing is worth hitting or getting hit over: not syringes, condoms, anything.
- If it is necessary to call 911 please alert other clients at the site who may not want to be there when the police arrive
- You are in a position of power here. Be professional and remember that our participants are not the enemy
- Remember that feeling challenged in these situations is a natural response
- Remember that our clients encounter daily obstacles and negative attention; they have many physical, emotional and practical challenges and like any of us: they have good days and bad days

**HIV/AIDS**

The following information is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). More complete information can be obtained by contacting the sources listed at the end of this section.

AIDS stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. An HIV-infected person receives a diagnosis of AIDS after developing one of the CDC-defined AIDS indicator illnesses. An HIV-positive person who has not had any serious illnesses also can receive an AIDS diagnosis on the basis of certain blood tests (CD4 counts).

A positive HIV test result does not mean that a person has AIDS. A diagnosis of AIDS is made by a physician using certain clinical criteria (e.g., AIDS indicator illnesses).

Infection with HIV can weaken the immune system to the point that it has difficulty fighting off certain infections. These types of infections are known as "opportunistic" infections because they take the opportunity a weakened immune system gives to cause illness.

Many of the infections that cause problems or may be life-threatening for people with AIDS are usually controlled by a healthy immune system. The immune system of a person with AIDS is weakened to the point that medical intervention may be necessary to prevent or treat serious illness.

Today there are medical treatments that can slow down the rate at which HIV weakens the
immune system. There are other treatments that can prevent or cure some of the illnesses associated with AIDS. As with other diseases, early detection offers more options for treatment and preventative care.

The SEP Coordinator can make available a wide variety of educational materials including journal articles, pamphlets, bibliography and website links. PPP will provide regular trainings for staff volunteers and clients and welcome any and all suggestions for educational development.

For more information...

Philadelphia FIGHT ACT UP Philadelphia : 215-731-1844
215-985-4448
1233 Locust Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Philadelphia Department of Public Health
AIDS Activities Coordinating Office
215-685-5600

CDC National AIDS Hotline
English: 1-800-342-AIDS
Spanish: 1-800-344-SIDA
Deaf: 1-800-243-7889

CDC National Prevention Information Network
P.O. Box 6003
Rockville, Maryland 20849-6003
1-800-458-5231

Internet Resources:
Critical Path AIDS Project: http://www.critpath.org
NCHSTP: http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/od/nchstp.html
DHAP: http://www.cdc.gov/hiv
NPIN: http://www.cdcnpin.org

Safer Injecting Tips

1. Don’t share anything. Syringes, cookers, water, and cotton should be your own.
2. Wipe your skin, in one direction, with an alcohol pad before you shoot - every time. If alcohol pads are not available, soap and water will do.
3. Rotate your injection sites. Using the same vein in the same spot with any great frequency will destroy your veins.
4. Use clean cotton to filter your drug.
5. Use clean water to cook/dilute your drugs.
6. Use a tie with a little give to find your vein. Leave the tie on for only a brief time period.
7. Try to inject with someone you trust, that way someone will be there to help if something goes wrong. In case of an emergency, call 911.
8. Try not to inject into the hands, feet, neck, or groin. You can do particularly serious damage to yourself in these areas.
9. If you’re not sure of the quality of your drug, do a small amount to test it first.
10. If you need drug treatment, social services, or healthcare, ask the staff and volunteers at PPP for help.

More information on vein-care and safer injecting can be found at the Chicago Recovery Alliance website: [www.anypositivechange.org](http://www.anypositivechange.org) and in Getting Off Right: A Safety Manual for Injection Drug Users, which may be found and downloaded from the Harm Reduction Coalition website: [www.harmreduction.org](http://www.harmreduction.org)