



A Global Overview of Safe Injection Facilities: Key Policies and Practices

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Harm Reduction and Public Health Policy in San Francisco

- On September 5th, 2000, the San Francisco Health Commission unanimously passed a resolution adopting a Harm Reduction Policy for Substance Abuse, STD and HIV treatment and prevention services, and/or programs that serve drug users and abusers in their programs.
- In response to the resolution the Department, in collaboration with an Oversight Committee, has developed a policy that will be implemented. The policy will require programs to:
address in their program design and objectives how they will provide harm reduction treatment options, and
develop harm reduction guidelines.
- The first city in the U.S. to make such an adoption



A Question...

What if I told you that there was a public health intervention that:

- Eliminates drug overdose deaths;
- Minimizes risks for abscesses, bacterial infections and endocarditis;
- Minimizes the risk of HIV, Hep B and Hep C transmission;
- Provides a gateway for entry to drug treatment, medical care and social service;
- Reduce discarded syringes, litter, and other public disorder concerns related to injection drug use

Would you be interested in employing that intervention?



The answer...

Safe Injection Facilities



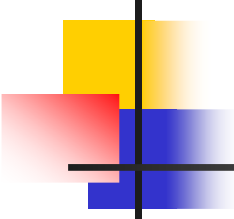
Safe Injection Facilities Defined

- Defined as “legally sanctioned and supervised facilities designed to reduce the health and public order problems associated with illegal injection drug use”
- Schneider, W and H. Stover (eds.)



SIFs, Defined

- SIFs “are places in which drug users are able to inject using clean equipment under the supervision of medically trained personnel” (Elliot 2002)
- “Drug consumption rooms is used to cover any room specifically set up for the supervised, hygienic consumption of pre-obtained, controlled drugs” (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2006)



SIFs versus “Shooting Galleries”

- The term “shooting gallery” is often used to describe unsanctioned premises where there is greater potential for unhygienic and riskier drug use, in the absence of trained medical and social service staff, where drugs and injecting equipment are bought in the same location.”
- SIFs are not to be confused with shooting galleries



Safe Injection Rooms Around the World

- Switzerland
- The Netherlands
- Germany
- Spain
- Norway
- Luxembourg
- Australia (Sydney)
- Canada (Vancouver)
- Coming Soon: Italy, perhaps Portugal
- There are approximately 65 SIFs in 40 cities world-wide



Switzerland: Where it all began

- The first SIF opened in Berne in June, 1986
- A response to HIV transmission and large numbers of overdose deaths
- Equally important: The public nuisance factor (public drug use, discarded syringes, petty criminality, etc)

Switzerland: How It Became Legal



- A group of judges, lawyers, the General Prosecutor and the Swiss Office of Public Health commissioned a legal assessment
- Findings indicated that "...state-controlled consumption rooms do not violate Swiss national drugs legislation as long as the rooms improve the hygienic conditions under which consumption takes place and provide medical supervision and no drug dealing takes place" (Hedrich 2004)
- A Policy Decision based on harm reduction, not criminalization



Swiss Safer Injection Facilities

- Consist of a café, counselling room, medical care clinic and injecting room.
- SIFs provide clean syringes and equipment, and provide for safe disposal of items when done



Swiss Safer Injection Facilities: Restrictions

- No buying or selling of drugs on the premises, nor can one “gift” a drug
- Age restrictions—no one under age 16
- No first-time injectors
- Staff cannot physically assist an injection
- A staff person must observe all injections



The Three Types of SIFs

- Typical Injecting Room
- Integrated Facilities
- Specialized Consumption Rooms



Typical Injecting Rooms

- Located in a larger facility, such as a drop-in center
- Its discreet, and not necessarily a focal point of the center
- Often include a cafeteria and lounge
- Services include medical care and counselling



Possible Typical Injecting Rooms in San Francisco

- Homeless Resource Centers
- AIDS Service Organizations
- Community Based Organizations
- Drug Treatment Centers



Integrated Facilities

- Combine a injecting room with an array of other services
- Have a common room, where coffee, TV and other drop-in amenities are available
- Service non-drug users as well
- Separate injecting rooms strictly monitored for appropriate admittance
- Has the benefit of providing easy access to services, and lesser likelihood of stigma for use
- SIFs in the Netherlands are Integrated Facilities



Potential Integrated SIFS in San Francisco

- Multi-Service Centers
- Homeless Resource Centers
- Homeless Shelters
- ASOs and CBOs



Specialized Safe Injection Facilities

- Stand alone centers specifically for IDUs
- Medical clinics with safe injection rooms
- Have the benefit of improving outreach and service delivery to the most marginalized and hard-to-reach clients
- Can also offer other services and maintains relationships with other service organizations to meet the needs of its clients
- The Sydney SIF is an example



Specialized SIFs in San Francisco

- Imagine a SFDPH-run medical clinic in the neighborhoods most impacted by injection drug use
- SIFs that combine a medical clinic developed solely for IDUs are uniquely situated to meet the needs of IDUs



Conclusions

- SIFs have been in existence for over 20 years, and are effective, evidence-based interventions to reduce the private harms and public harms of injection drug use
- The SFDPH policy of harm reduction-based services