



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Community and Economic Development

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City Appoints Committee to Monitor Clean Syringe Exchange Program *New Program Web Site Also Online*

SAN DIEGO – City Manager Michael Uberuaga today announced his appointments to the 12-member Clean Syringe Exchange Program Facilitation Committee. The Committee is charged with monitoring the one-year Clean Syringe Exchange Pilot Program, which was launched this summer.

Committee members include **Bill Baber**, with the Office of Mayor Dick Murphy; **Daniel Bess**, with the North Park Planning Committee; **Fran Butler Cohen**, with Family Health Centers of San Diego; **Dr. Cynthia Burke**, with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG); **Dr. James Dunford** with the City's Emergency Medical Services; **Debra Fischle-Faulk**, with the City's Community and Economic Development Department; and **Michael Franz**, with the McAlister Institute. Additional members include **Linda Lloyd**, with Alliance Healthcare Foundation, **Dr. Wm. Christopher Mathews**, with UCSD School of Medicine, **Lt. Cesar Solis**, with the San Diego Police Department, **Jim Varnadore**, with the City Heights Planning Committee and **Leslie Wade**, with the East Village Association

The City Council authorized the pilot program in response to the public health crisis created by the spread of the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and HIV/AIDS. On July 18, the program began offering its services at a site in the East Village, using a non-descript, mobile facility to prevent the possibility of loitering. Two more sites, one in City Heights and the other in North Park, are under consideration in cooperation with those communities. These neighborhoods were recommended in June 2001 by a task force appointed by the City Council to study the issue.

The City is also helping to educate the public about the pilot program through a new web page featured on the City's web site at www.sandiego.gov (type "clean syringe" in the search field). The web page provides an overview of the program, from the conditions that spurred its development to how it will be implemented. In addition, "facts," "frequently asked questions," and "testimonials" sections serve to educate the community and address issues and concerns programs like this generate. Also included are links to relevant political documents and resources, as well as partner organizations.

In San Diego, the number of reported HCV cases increased by 50 percent between 1998 and 1999, and the rate of AIDS cases is the third highest in the state, a condition exacerbated by the shared use of needles and syringes by injection drug users.

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**City Appoints Committee to Monitor
Clean Syringe Exchange Program
Page 2**

These circumstances caused the San Diego City Council to declare and maintain a state of local health emergency since October 2000. Under the direction of the City Council, a Clean Syringe Exchange Task Force was formed whose recommendations led to the Clean Syringe Exchange Pilot Program. Central to the Exchange Program is a drug abuse treatment referral component to combat the issue of drug addiction.

The City's Community and Economic Development Department has oversight responsibility of the program. However, the Clean Syringe Exchange Pilot Program is privately funded and operated. The program is entirely funded by Alliance Healthcare Foundation and operated by Family Health Centers of San Diego.

"It is a sensitive project, but one right in line with our mission to provide care to medically underserved individuals," said Fran Butler-Cohen, chief executive officer of Family Health Centers. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health have been contracted to monitor and evaluate program effectiveness.

As one of the last major cities to facilitate clean needle exchange, San Diego is following the nation's lead – taking the steps necessary to reduce and reverse the effects of intravenous drug use. For more information about the Clean Syringe Exchange Pilot Program, contact the City of San Diego Community and Economic Development Department at SHeshimu@sandiego.gov or Family Health Centers of San Diego at (619) 515-2586 or RobertL@lhfhc.com.

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With an emphasis on the City's urban core neighborhoods and low and moderate income residents, the City of San Diego's Community and Economic Development Department strives to improve the quality of life and ensure a healthy economy in San Diego through job development, business development, neighborhood revitalization, public improvements, redevelopment, social services, and revenue enhancement.