



The rationale for Supervised Injection Facilities (SIFs)

It's time to save some lives



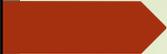
John Barry, LMSW

- ▶ Executive Director of the Southern Tier AIDS Program since 2008
- ▶ University of Chicago graduate
- ▶ 25+ years experience in HIV, Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment



Southern Tier AIDS Program

- ▶ In existence since 1984, merged with AIDS Work in 2002
- ▶ Serves 8 counties
- ▶ Employs 95
- ▶ Budget of 6.5 million annually
- ▶ 3 fixed site syringe exchanges-Ithaca, Johnson City and Norwich



What we are currently doing to combat substance use is not as effective as we need it to be.

- ▶ Prevention
- ▶ Incarceration
- ▶ Treatment
- ▶ Harm Reduction
- ▶ Much like AIDS in the 1980s required us to create new systems of care, because those in place were inadequate to meet the need, we now require new approaches to problematic substance use.



Harm Reduction History- Syringe Exchange Programs (SEPs)

- ▶ SEPs began as a research pilot project in New York in early 1990s.
- ▶ 25 statewide in New York
- ▶ First rural exchange opened in Ithaca in 2002.
- ▶ Evolving into health centers



RURAL COMMUNITIES CAN BE AT PRONOUNCED RISK

- ▶ In 2015, Indiana health officials diagnosed HIV in nearly 200 people in a rural town of 4,200, most due to injection drug use.
- ▶ Immediately following the outbreak, Indiana permitted Syringe Exchange Programs for the first time
- ▶ This small town in Indiana experienced more HIV infections in 2015 due to shared injection equipment than New York City



Needle Exchange-a radical research pilot program that saved countless lives

- ▶ A 2014 report by New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute found that in 1992, 52% of new HIV infections derived from injection drug use. In 2012, after needle exchanges had been operational for more than two decades, those cases accounted for only 3% of new diagnoses.
- ▶ http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/05/red-state-hiv-epidemic-drug-use-republican-governors-118379_Page2.html#ixzz3bY7D6ayo
- ▶ In 2002 when the Ithaca syringe exchange opened SEPs were considered a radical idea.



Concerns:

- ▶ Will SIFs attract drug users?
 - ▶ Did not happen with SEPs and the research does not show that happening in communities that open SIFs.
 - ▶ Research here:
<http://www.communityinsite.ca/science.html>



What good can SIFs do in our community?

- ▀ Supervised Injection Facilities can;
 - ▀ Reduce/prevent overdose deaths
 - ▀ Prevent infection with HIV, Hepatitis B and C
 - ▀ Prevent venous damage, heart infections, abscesses etc. and the associated healthcare costs



What good can SIFs do in our community?

- ▀ Facilitate access to treatment
- ▀ Provide social support and social reintegration
- ▀ Community benefits include reductions in:
 - ▀ discarded needles and syringes and other drug related litter
 - ▀ open drug scenes and public injecting.



Is the Southern Tier AIDS Program really ready to do this?

- ▶ STAP owns its office and has space carved out
- ▶ We have explored all the legal and liability issues
- ▶ Syringe Exchange already employs medical staff and staff experienced in working with injection drug users and reversing overdoses
- ▶ We feel passionate about preventing needless deaths, hospitalizations and emergency room visits
- ▶ We want to prevent public injecting and injecting in the bathrooms of local businesses, the library etc.



What about resources?

- ▶ We have been meeting regularly with foundations interested in seeing Supervised Injection Facilities open in this country.
- ▶ No taxpayer funds would be requested for the research pilot.



In closing

- ▶ All the arguments marshalled against Supervised Injection Facilities mimic the concerns of those opposed to syringe exchange programs, which have been a public health triumph
- ▶ Over 100 of these sites have been in operation for decades in 11 countries, with new ones opening every few months
- ▶ Brief accessible report on safer consumption spaces by the American Foundation for AIDS Research
<http://opioid.amfar.org/amfAR%20Supervised%20Consumption%20Services.pdf>