

L. Cauchen BOS 6/20/2023

#34

6/20/2022

Dear EDC BOS and Ms. Ross:

I write in support of continuing the CDPH licensing of the Sierra Harm Reduction Coalition. It is my understanding from both research reviews and personal experiences that their services are needed supports for public health and safety in EDC. The Sierra Harm Reduction Coalition is evidence based, compassionate, and saves lives.

As stated by our county public health officer during the 10/11/22 public hearing on this item both Hepatitis C and Congenital Syphilis rates are of concern in EDC. She also shared that the county's relatively low population requires that we use practices based on nationally derived evidence rather than local data.

My experience is from decades of work with the unhoused, many struggling with addictions (52% of the Sierra Harm Reduction's 2021 recipients). The director of Sierra Harm Reduction exemplified the compassion so important to this work during his 10/11/22 presentation. His compassion continued during combative grilling by some supervisors and extremely insulting questioning by a member of the public (video at meeting link).

Finally the 10/11/22 presentation shared that harm reduction services resulted in 309 client reported overdose reversals. To me that is an enormous benefit.

Respectfully I think that a probable majority of the BOS is rushing to a negative judgement. This is evident in the errors contained in their proposed (6/20/23) letter to the CDPH:

*"Following the presentation, (10/11/22) board discussion and public comment, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors as well as the community expressed unanimous opposition to Sierra Harm Reduction's services and activities on the West Slope of El Dorado County."*

A review of the 10/11/22 video and minutes indicates that neither the community or the BOS "expressed unanimous opposition". Six community members commented. All expressed concerns, most supported NARCAN. Similarly the BOS mostly expressed concerns. Only one wanted the presenter "out of the county".

*"Furthermore reviewing local data, the Board of Supervisors did not find that local conditions exist that show the rapid spread of HIV, viral hepatitis or other blood-borne diseases."*

The BOS requested more local data after the 10/11/22 presentation. This has not been reviewed at a public meeting nor made available after a PRA request. Again our public health official did express concern on 10/11/22 about "viral hepatitis and other-blood born diseases".

*"Locally, it is our unhoused population that primarily is the recipient of harm reduction services."*

The PowerPoint part of the 20/11/22 presentation showed that 52% of the harm reduction services recipients were unhoused. 48% were housed, some in our most affluent areas.

*“Local statistics show an increase in crime and drug related offenses directly related to syringe exchange programs and services, and several cases from the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office are documented below:*

- 1. Heroin sales*
- 2. Heroin possession*
- 3. Heroin case*
- 4. Fentanyl death*
- 5. Fentanyl death*
- 6. Tahoe Harm Reduction CEO arrest”*

Anecdotal, not statistical, evidence is provided. #1-5 conflate the correlation of the presence of harm reduction supplies with the actual causes of the crime. #6 is not in Sierra Harm Reduction’s service area nor on CDPH’s list of licensed service providers.

I have shared with many EDC residents supportive of keeping evidence based treatment for our community members challenged by substance use disorder. They identified good reasons to continue with needle exchange/harm reduction programs:

Lower numbers of contaminated needles in a community.

Reduced drug-related behavior.

Reduced sexual-risk behavior.

Increased access to drug treatment referral services.

Increased access to testing and diagnostic services.

Increased access to education about substance abuse.

Increased communication with hard-to-reach populations.

Reduced prevalence of new infections.

As an engaged EDC citizen I think that our BOS is at times unfortunately lacking in the political will to stand up to the increasing partisanship which infects public health and safety debates. Improving state wide health and safety outcomes is my reading of the reason for adding the state as an authorizing of evidence based syringe exchange programs under the CA Health and Safety Code Section 121349. I urge the CDHS to continue its role in ensuring that all residents in our state and in our local county remain enabled to maintain their human rights including our most basic right: the right to life!

Thank you,



Léo Bennett-Cauchon

## NOTES:

### **Evidence Based Treatment**

Nearly thirty years of research shows that comprehensive SSPs are safe, effective, and cost-saving, do not increase illegal drug use or crime, and play an important role in reducing the transmission of viral hepatitis, HIV and other infections.

<https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/index.html>

### **10/11/22 Meeting Video Link**

4:45:00: Presentation

5:00:00: Board Questions

5:45:00: Public Comments

<https://eldorado.granicus.com/player/clip/1726?>

[view\\_id=2&redirect=true&h=32afdf3bf74dae08f10f14d741385131](https://eldorado.granicus.com/player/clip/1726?view_id=2&redirect=true&h=32afdf3bf74dae08f10f14d741385131)

### **From 10/11/22 Minutes:**

Item 25 Public Comment: C. Cockrell, K. Greenwood, A. Nevis, J. Gainsborough, M. Rodriguez, C. Hearn

The Board received and filed the following:

- 1) A presentation and report as a requirement of and in accordance with California Health and Safety Code Section 121349.3, detailing the status of the Sierra Harm Reduction Coalition's (SHRC) syringe exchange program authorized by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH); and
- 2) A follow-up presentation from the Executive Director of SHRC to provide information about how SHRC operates with the purpose of reducing the incidence of blood-borne pathogens and other harms associated with drug use in the County.

A motion was made by Supervisor Parlin, seconded by Supervisor Novasel to direct staff to:

- 1) Provide each Board member with the contact information for the Office of AIDS and the California Department of Public Health; and
- 2) Contact the Office of AIDS to coordinate a discussion with the Board in a local format.

<https://eldorado.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=M&ID=992216&GUID=AE781BEC-D57C-4B9F-B3A8-E5D46E8026BB>

### **10/11/22 meeting presentation:**

Metrics:

NARCAN distributed: 1335 (total > 2000)

Client reported overdose reversals: 309 (total 503)

- Fentanyl tests distributed: 2328 (total 3090)
- Client reported positive test for fentanyl: 915 (total 1194)
- Positive testing rate rapidly

<https://eldorado.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11297344&GUID=560D271F-4DEE-4775-B214-AC270673E1A4>

## **CA Licensed Syringe Exchange Providers**

[https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/pages/oa\\_prev\\_sepdirectory.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/pages/oa_prev_sepdirectory.aspx)

### **CPHC Section 121349**

Analysis: AB 604 (2011)

The author contends that federal funding is now available to California to support SEPs and to prevent costly and deadly infections, but the lack of Syringe Exchange Programs in some of these areas means that taxpayers statewide get stuck with paying the bill.

Supporters:

Drug Policy Alliance (sponsor)

AIDS Project Los Angeles

American Civil Liberties Union

American Nurses Association California

California Association of Alcohol and Drug

Program Executives, Inc.

California Hepatitis Alliance

California Nurses Association

California Opioid Maintenance Providers

California Society of Addiction Medicine

California State Board of Pharmacy

California Syringe Exchange Provider Network

Center for Health Justice

Clinica Monsenor Oscar A. Romero

Common Ground: The Westside HIV Community Center

[http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab\\_0601-0650/  
ab\\_604\\_cfa\\_20110621\\_174801\\_sen\\_comm.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0601-0650/ab_604_cfa_20110621_174801_sen_comm.html)