

NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH UNIT LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE NEEDLE EXCHANGE

PARRY SOUND, ON – Starting November 19, 2019, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (Health Unit) is launching Sharps Buy Back for the duration of November, or until supplies last. During this initiative, the Health Unit will provide a \$5 gift card for every 100 used sharps (e.g. needles or syringes) brought to the Health Unit's Parry Sound location. One hundred sharps is the approximate equivalent to two small sharps containers (about 50 sharps in each), one large sharps container, or a similar puncture proof container (like a 2L pop bottle). Sharps Buy Back targets individuals who would benefit from using needle exchange services.

"Sharps Buy Back is an initiative launched by the Health Unit to collect used sharps while teaching individuals about our needle exchange services and how to pick up sharps safely," says Joanna Han, Community Health Promoter.

If a sharp is found in the community, follow these instructions to pick it up safely:

- Do not walk while holding the sharp object.
- Bring a puncture-proof, hard-sided, leak-proof container with a lid, such as a pickle jar or bleach container, to the area where the sharp was found.
- Do not recap, bend, break the needle or manipulate it by hand in any way.
- Place the object in the container using tongs if available. If tongs are not available pick up the needle/sharp from the blunt end and place it in the puncture-proof container. Secure the lid.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Label the container "hazardous waste" and bring to the Health Unit for proper disposal.

Though the campaign is only running through November, or until supplies last, the Health Unit provides needle exchange services year round. The needle exchange program is part of the Health Unit's harm reduction programming, which recognizes that a certain percentage of the population will use drugs; however, the goal is to reduce the harm that might result from drug use. Those who use drugs are at risk of transmitting HIV, hepatitis and other blood borne infections. Needle exchange services are proven to reduce the spread of infection without increasing intravenous drug use.

In addition to a needle exchange program, the Health Unit also offers naloxone, safer inhalation kits, safer crystal meth kits, and a variety of other health services like free dental care for eligible adults and children, free or low-cost birth control options, and Hepatitis C, HIV, and STI testing.

For more information on the Sharps Buy Back campaign, visit www.myhealthunit.ca/sharps or call 1-800-563-2808.

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