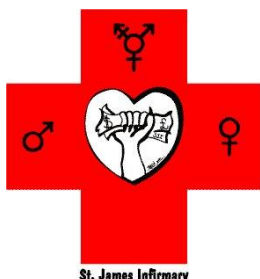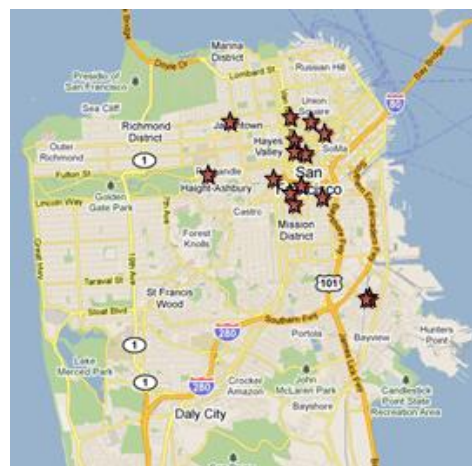# Syringe Access Services are highly effective in preventing HIV and Hepatitis C in our community

"Studies show that comprehensive prevention and drug treatment programs, including needle exchange, have dramatically cut the number of new HIV infections among injecting drug users (IDUs). In fact, **HIV infections among IDUs have dropped from a peak of nearly 35,000 infections annually in the late 1980s to just 3,900 new infections in 2010**." - CDC HIV Fact Sheet

The Syringe Access Collaborative (SAC) provides syringe access and disposal services through multiple community-based organizations in our city (see map). The key to SAC's strength is each program's expertise and cultural competency with different populations of people who inject drugs.

Syringe Access Services are rooted in the successful tradition of harm reduction, which begins with the notion of "meeting people where they are at" when it comes to their drug use. SAC programs are located in neighborhoods where drug users live and connect participants to additional health and wellness services that can address their individual needs. Research shows that this approach is the most effective way to stem the tide of new HIV and Hepatitis C infections and connect people to other crucial services, such as HIV/Hep C treatment and primary medical care.

Syringe Access Services and Stakeholder Benefits

Support Services	Benefit to the *Health System*	Benefit to the *Community*	Benefit to the *Individual*
Access to Sterile Injecting Supplies	• Reduces disease transmission, wounds, blood infections, phlebitis, blood clots • Fewer acute episodes that demand significant health system resources	• Reduced needle stick injury and improper disposal of syringes in public places • Protects health and safety of families, law enforcement, and public workers	• Improves health outcomes • Empowers individual with ability to administer preventative self-care • Reduces stigma
Wound Care Supplies and Health Education	• Reduces skin and soft tissue infections • Increases timely linkage to health services before serious acute episodes occur • Encourages treatment adherence and retention in care through ingoing care coordination	• Decreases transmission of community acquired MRSA and other infections via contact with public surfaces • Saves public resources by treating wounds before they require emergency services	• Enables patient self-care • Prevents acute episodes requiring medical attention
Health Insurance Enrollment Assistance	• Increases access to health care for hard to reach populations • Reduces the use of emergency services	• Saves public resources used to care for uninsured people	• Assists people with limited access to computers and information • Access health insurance and find medical homes
Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Drug Treatment	• Reduces drug related use of health services for acute and chronic conditions • Facilitates appropriate linkage to treatment	• Strengthens families and communities by assisting the individual's return to health and productivity	• Reduces drug related health consequences, diseases, accidents, and injuries • Engenders hope for positive change
Overdose Prevention and Education	• Reduces emergency room visits and 911 calls	• Prevents trauma and adverse experiences for children, families, and communities	• Empowers individuals and communities to save lives
Hepatitis C and HIV Testing, Counseling, and Referral	• Identifies cases of disease infection • Creates effective linkages with appropriate care setting • Encourages treatment adherence and retention in care through ongoing care coordination and tracking	• Reduces disease burden and financial cost associated with caring for those with chronic disease	• Increases disease status awareness • Reduces risky injecting and sexual behaviors • Provides access to supplies and health education the individual to care for self and others
Care Coordination and Linkage to Housing	• Reduces impact of acute and chronic conditions associated with homelessness, mental illness, and substance use • Reduces cost of services across health and social sectors	• Reduces environmental, social, and economic impacts of homelessness, mental illness, substance use	• Provides stability for those living in crisis • Improves health outcomes • Reduces isolation
Peer and Mentor Support	• Mitigates acute and chronic episodes associated with past experience of trauma and lack of access to appropriate health care, housing, and social services	• Supports social connection between the individual and the community	• Reduces isolation and stigma • Improves health outcomes