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NEW DROP BOX WILL COLLECT USED NEEDLES

WHITEHORSE – A new drop box will help reduce the number of used needles littering Whitehorse’s public spaces.

The drop box is being installed in front of Blood Ties Four Directions for the safe disposal of used needles. It is a joint initiative of Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the City of Whitehorse and the Department of Health and Social Services.

The partners commissioned a report to examine the use of drop boxes in like-sized communities in Western Canada. As a result Blood Ties Four Directions bought the first drop box and the City of Whitehorse is providing the staff to install it. Use of the box will be evaluated after a few months to determine whether or not to purchase more.

The drop box is expected to be functional by the end of May 2005.

The drop box collects syringes used in intravenous drug use, lancets used by diabetics to measure their blood sugar levels, syringes used by people with chronic conditions to deliver medication, and needles used to administer medication to pets.

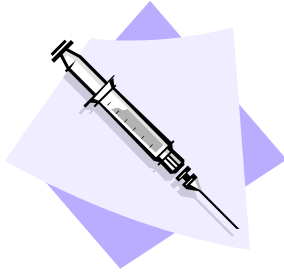
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Backgrounder on needle safety attached.

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Needle Safety

People use needles for a lot of different reasons. Everyone needs to know how to safely dispose of used needles. Needles that are disposed of in the wrong way can seriously injure people who come into contact with them. People who find these needles can be at great risk of hurting themselves.

Used needles are dangerous!

When needles have been used, often there is a small amount of blood left inside, or viruses that you may not be able to see. This may have viruses that cause hepatitis B and C, and HIV, plus many other diseases.

A person who is poked by a used needle is at risk of becoming infected with these viruses. Any time a person receives a needlestick injury, there is a risk of getting a very serious disease.

Needles are often found:

- In alleys and behind buildings
- In parks and playgrounds
- In garbage cans
- Behind toilets
- Under mattresses and pillows
- In pockets of clothing

Don't put your hand anywhere there might be a needle hidden, and if you find a needle that has been thrown away, follow these steps:

In Whitehorse:

- ✓ Have someone stay with the needle to prevent someone else from getting poked, especially a child.
- ✓ Call Blood Ties at 633-2437, from Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and someone will pick the needle up
- ✓ Call the Outreach Van at 333-2363 Tuesday, Thursdays and Fridays from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. for pick-up in community locations
- ✓ **Never** use your hands to pick up a needle

Outside of Whitehorse:

- ✓ Have someone stay with the needle to prevent anyone from getting poked
- ✓ Call the RCMP or Community Health Centre for advice
- ✓ **Never** use your hands to pick up a needle

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How to properly dispose of needles

- ✓ Place container on a stable surface.
- ✓ Put on disposable gloves—rubber kitchen or latex
- ✓ Use pliers, tongs or tweezers to pick up a needle. (You could use a thick cloth or thick glove, but be careful.)
- ✓ Never recap the needle
- ✓ Hold the needle tip away from you
- ✓ Put the needle sharp end first, into a non-breakable, puncture-proof container (biohazardous sharps container, or a bleach bottle, or thick plastic peanut butter jar)
- ✓ Close the container securely—only fill a container $\frac{3}{4}$ full, if the container is too full, the needles may poke through the side.
- ✓ Dispose of the tool you used to put the needle in the container, or disinfect it with a bleach solution (1 part household bleach to 9 parts water) or with another disinfectant solution.
- ✓ Remove and dispose of the gloves, then wash your hands with soap and water
- ✓ Store the container in a safe place away from children.
- ✓ Never put needles down toilets, drains or storm sewers

What to do in case of a needlestick injury

First Aid

- ✓ Allow the wound to bleed
- ✓ Wash the area well with soap and water for 10 to 15 minutes
- ✓ Clean and swab with antiseptic if available
- ✓ For exposure to the eyes or mouth, flush well with water for 10 to 15 minutes
- ✓ If a work-related incident, report immediately to your supervisor
- ✓ Seek medical attention at either Yukon Communicable Disease Control, Emergency at Whitehorse General Hospital or the local health centre within two hours. The health care professional will guide you through a risk assessment process and provide advice based on that assessment.
- ✓ If the injury is work related, please complete the Workman's Compensation Board papers.

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN TO NEVER TOUCH A NEEDLE OR SYRINGE IF THEY FIND ONE AND TO TELL AN ADULT RIGHT AWAY

