**IRA Syringe Free Communities Project Volunteer Form**

**Thank you for volunteering to help keep our communities safe and beautiful. Your help to keep our public health project going is invaluable, and deeply appreciated.**

***Syringe Disposal Options:***

**Drop-off collection sites:** Sharps users can take their filled sharps container to appropriate collection sites, which may include doctors’ offices, hospitals, health clinics, pharmacies, health departments, community organizations, police and fire stations, and medical waste facilities. These programs may distribute appropriate sharps containers or give self-injectors the option of continuing to use empty household containers to collect sharps.

**Household hazardous waste collection sites:** Self-injectors can place their used sharps in a special sharps container, or in some cases, an approved household container, then take them to municipal household hazardous waste collection sites and place them in the sharps collection bins. 6

**Residential special waste pickup services:** Self-injectors can place their used sharps in a special container, similar to a recycling container, and put it outside their home for collection by trained special waste handlers. Some programs require customers to call for pickup, while others offer regular pickup schedules.

**Mail-back programs:** Used sharps are placed in special containers, which are mailed (in accordance with the U.S. Postal Service requirements) to a collection site for proper disposal. Mail-back programs are available for individual use by sharps users, and can also serve as a disposal method for community collection sites. These programs work well for rural communities, communities that don’t already have a medical waste pickup service, and individuals who wish to protect their privacy. **Syringe exchange programs:** Sharps users can exchange their used needles for new needles. Exchange programs are usually operated by community organizations, which properly dispose of the used needles collected at exchange sites.

**Home needle destruction devices**: A variety of products are available that clip, melt, or burn the needle and allow the sharps user to throw the syringe or plunger in the garbage. The devices can reduce or eliminate the danger of sharps entering the waste stream.

**Last Resort:** If none of the options listed above are available in the community, a last resort is to dispose of the used syringes/sharps in a heavy duty plastic bottle such as a laundry detergent bottle and tape the lid shut. (Do not use coffee cans – they are not puncture resistant) On the outside of the bottle, where it can be easily seen, write “WARNING: SYRINGES - DO NOT RECYCLE” on the outside and then place in the household trash.

**Accidental Needle Sticks:**

While it is policy for volunteers or staff to not touch used or potentially used syringes at any time during the operation of the outreach, an accidental needle stick may result. If anyone is stuck by a needle and the skin is broken the following actions should be immediately taken:

1) Encourage bleeding through the wound caused by the needle. Bleeding through the fresh wound may help cleanse the wound and avoid infections. Wash the wound with soap and water ASAP.

2) Immediately call 911 or seek immediate emergency medical treatment. Please contact the IRA at 1-812-56-SAFER.

3) Collect the syringe that stuck you, if possible without additional stick risk, for testing.

Throughout all IRA operations at no time are syringes to be touched. The people bringing syringes in to exchange are responsible for placing them directly into our puncture-proof sharps container. If a syringe falls on the ground or otherwise does not make it into the sharps container IRA personnel will ask the person who brought it in to place it in the sharps container. Photo tongs will be used to assist anyone in reducing their contacts with the syringes. When a sharps container is full to the line indicated on its side it should be closed with the attached lid and put in a safe, out of-the-way place. It is not reopened or reused after this point and it proceeds directly to disposal. These procedures are more stringent than the Blood Borne Pathogens Standards as promulgated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for health care settings.

I have read and understand the following best practices for syringe disposal and agree to follow these protocols. I also agree to not hold the IRA responsible for any accidental needle sticks should they occur while volunteering:

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