

# SHARPS SAFE DISPOSAL

## Background

The presence of sharps in areas close to where staff, students and members of the general public interact could represent a potentially serious risk to human health. Precautions must be taken to ensure that sharps are disposed in a safe and healthy manner.

There are risks of touching sharps or by being poked by a sharp. In certain circumstances a sharp may contain blood inside or on the sharp. If another person happens to be poked by a contaminated sharp the blood may enter the bloodstream and they may potentially get sick should the user have a blood borne disease such as HIV or Hepatitis. While the vast majority of people will not get sick by picking up or getting poked by a sharp it is extremely important to be cautious due to the hazard. Viruses in or on sharps generally die within minutes to hours, sometimes longer, and since there is no way to know how long a sharp has been lying where found, precautions must be taken.

## Definition

1. Sharps shall include needles, syringes, crack pipes (glass stems), hookah, razor blades and other similar items.
2. Designated Custodian is the custodian designated by the Facilities and Operations Supervisor who is appropriately trained for patrolling school grounds and is appropriately trained for the disposal of needles and sharps.

## Procedures

Schools and the Facility and Operations Department must be vigilant in the identification of used needles or sharps and respond promptly.

1. The Facilities and Operations Supervisor shall:
  - 1.1. Ensure a custodian on staff is designated to patrol the school grounds and playground in the morning, prior to students coming to school, to check for needles or sharps of any kind and if found, dispose of the sharp in the method outlined below.
  - 1.2. Ensure designated custodians are appropriately trained for:
    - 1.2.1. the identification of needles and sharps;
    - 1.2.2. how to patrol and check for sharps and needles; and,
    - 1.2.3. how to appropriately dispose of needles and sharps.
  - 1.3. Ensure schools have sufficient supplies for the disposal of needles and sharps including:
    - 1.3.1. Latex gloves

- 1.3.2. Tongs, pliers or tweezers
  - 1.3.3. Disinfectant for cleaning tongs, pliers or tweezers
  - 1.3.4. Sharps container for transporting the needle or sharp from the location found to the secure storage.
- 1.4. Arrange for the disposal of the sharps container as appropriate (ie. when full or on an as needed basis). This disposal may include HIV Link or other vendor as appropriate.
- 1.5. Ensure schools have an appropriate designated secured location for holding collected needles or sharps.
- 1.6. Notify the Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer in the event a sharp or needle is found at a school and jointly:
  - 1.1.1. consider notification of all school to ensure awareness
  - 1.1.2. consider increased frequency of school ground patrols or intensity of the morning patrol
  - 1.1.3. consider notification to HIV Link, police and other stake holders as deemed appropriate
  - 1.1.4. consider if there is a trend and consider if other procedures are needed
2. Designated Custodian Needles and Sharps Disposal Procedure
  - 2.1. Treat all needles sharps as contaminated.
  - 2.2. Wear latex gloves. Gloves protect against fluids, not against punctures or cuts.
  - 2.3. Use designated tongs, pliers or tweezers to pick up the needle; be sure to disinfect the pickup instrument afterwards.
  - 2.4. Pick up the needle by the plastic end (syringe).
  - 2.5. Point the needle tip away from the body. Be careful not to poke yourself – your safety is the most important thing.
  - 2.6. Put the needle or sharp in the sharps container on a stable surface. Be sure not to hold the container while placing the needle inside.
  - 2.7. Place the needle point down into the container. Do not force the needle into the container.
  - 2.8. If a sharps container is not readily available, place the needle in a puncture-proof container with a lid (i.e. thick plastic container or tin can).
  - 2.9. Close the container securely.
  - 2.10. Find the nearest needle disposal location. Do not flush the needle down the toilet or place them in the garbage/recycling.

- 2.11. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after removal of gloves.
  - 2.12. If a needle-stick injury occurs, seek medical attention immediately and contact the Facilities and Operations Supervisor who will ensure Human Resources is notified.
  - 2.13. Notify the principal of the school and the Facilities and Operations supervisor in the event a needle or sharp is disposed of.
3. The School Principal shall ensure:
    - 3.1. School staff are aware of this Administrative Procedure and their responsibilities
    - 3.2. Students are instructed to not touch needles or Sharps and who to notify if one is found.
  4. If a needle or sharp is discovered on the school grounds by staff, students or others, they shall:
    - 4.1. Ensure the supervising staff is notified
    - 4.2. The supervising staff shall secure the location to prevent access to the needle or sharp as appropriate and notify the principal immediately
    - 4.3. The principal shall notify the designated custodian to dispose of the needle or sharp as soon as safely possible
      - 4.3.1. If the designated custodian is not available, notify the Facilities and Operations Supervisor who shall arrange to dispose of the needle or sharp which may include HIV Link.
    - 4.4. The principal shall ensure the location where the needle or sharp was found remains appropriately secured and safe
    - 4.5. If after hours, contact the Facilities and Operations Supervisor.

References:  
OHS ACT and regulations  
MHCBE OHS manual  
HIV Link document - 2018