

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Harm Reduction Past, Present, and Future (And Narcan Vending Machines)

04.12.2023

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Who Am I?:

Paul LaKosky, PhD., Executive Director, Dave Purchase Project (DPP) since 2017. Dave Purchase Project operates the Tacoma Needle Exchange, the first community-supported and legally-sanctioned Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) in the US. In addition, we operate the NASEN Buyers Club, a free membership purchasing collective that facilitates the distribution of low-cost harm reduction supplies to SSPs in the US, Puerto Rico, and US Virgin Islands. We maintain the NASEN SSP Directory, the most comprehensive directory of SSPs in the US.

I began my public health career in 1992, in Cameroon, West Africa. Since then I have held a variety of positions in NYC, Chicago, and Tacoma, WA. My academic training is in cultural anthropology.

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

## What I'm Presenting:

A brief, admittedly incomplete, description of the evolution of Harm Reduction in the US, some of the major players in the Harm Reduction movement and the impact they have had on the lives of people who use drugs (PWUD), and an overview of how we practice harm reduction at Dave Purchase Project/Tacoma Needle Exchange.

Some of the ideas I present here might be controversial, or even disagreeable to some, but *everything* I present here will be backed by science, not (just) opinion or politics.

I'm summarizing and leaving out a lot of detail. Many, many more people and organizations than I could ever recount here have made the work I do possible. All factual errors, omissions, and misstatements are my own.

For a more thorough history of the Harm Reduction Movement in the US and its roots in Europe take a look at ["Undoing Drugs"](#) Maia Szalavitz.

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

- What is Harm Reduction?: Variations on a Theme.
  - A pragmatic public health approach to practices, programs, and policies that aim to reduce the adverse health, social, and economic consequences of substance use without requiring individuals to abstain from substance use (CNA, 2011). <https://mharesource.rnao.ca/section-five/harm-reduction-teaching-activities-and-resources>
  - Harm reduction incorporates a spectrum of strategies that includes safer use, managed use, abstinence, meeting people who use drugs “where they’re at,” and addressing conditions of use along with the use itself. Because harm reduction demands that interventions and policies designed to serve people who use drugs reflect specific individual and community needs, there is no universal definition of or formula for implementing harm reduction. <https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>
  - Harm reduction refers to policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimise the negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies and drug laws.

Harm reduction is grounded in justice and human rights. It focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that people stop using drugs as a precondition of support. <https://hri.global/what-is-harm-reduction/>

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

- What is Harm Reduction?: (cont.)
  - Harm reduction approaches help reduce certain health and safety issues associated with drug use.<sup>1</sup> As a model of substance use care distinct from treatment or recovery support,<sup>2</sup> harm reduction was created by and for people who use drugs<sup>3</sup> to improve health and wellbeing, including during active drug use. Well-studied harm reduction strategies include syringe services and naloxone distribution programs.
  - Decades of research have shown that some harm reduction strategies provide significant individual and public health benefits,<sup>4,5,6</sup> including preventing deaths from overdoses and preventing transmission of infectious diseases among people who use drugs and the larger community. Others reduce emergency department visits and costly healthcare services,<sup>7,8</sup> while in some cases offering people who use drugs opportunities to connect to substance use treatment<sup>9,10</sup> and other healthcare<sup>10</sup> services in settings relatively free of stigma. (<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/harm-reduction>).
  - "Harm Reduction is a set of strategies and tactics which encourage users to reduce harm done to themselves and their communities by licit and illicit drug use. By allowing users to access the tools to become healthier, we recognize the competency of their efforts to protect themselves, their loved ones and their communities." (Harm Reduction Working Collective, 1993).

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

What is the Goal of Harm Reduction?:

“To keep people alive and encourage positive change in their lives.”

<https://hri.global/what-is-harm-reduction/>

“Any Positive Change - as defined by the individual.”

John Szyler, Co-Founder, Chicago Recovery Alliance

<https://anypositivechange.org/cra-services/>

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Major Players In Harm Reduction:

“The Goddess of Harm Reduction”

- Edith Springer

Social Worker

Met Allan Parry in February 1988

1st US Harm Reduction Trainer

Trained 30,000 in Harm Reduction

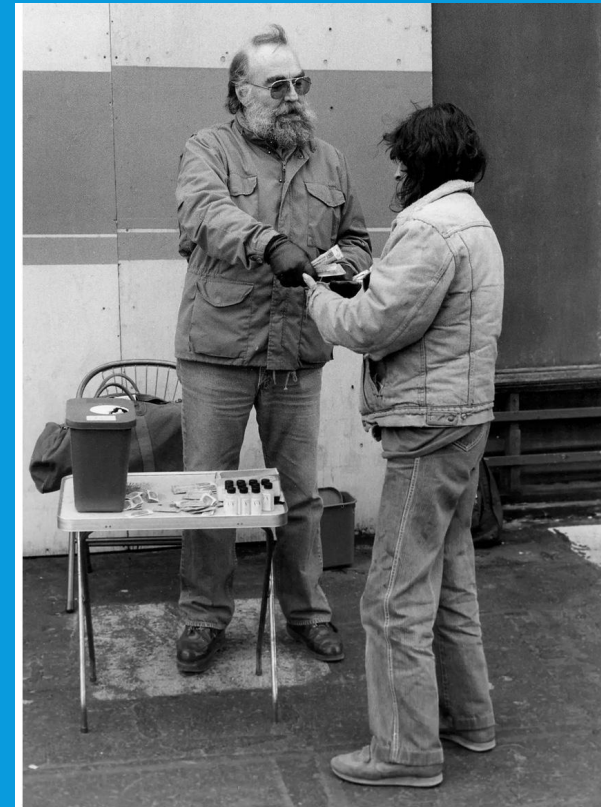


# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Major Players In Harm Reduction:

Patron Saint Of SEPs

- Dave Purchase  
Tacoma Needle Exchange,  
Founder and Executive Director  
(1988-2009)



Dave Purchase handing out syringes on his own in Tacoma, Wash., in the late 1980s. Doug Wilson



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Major Players In Harm Reduction:

Patron Saint of Naloxone

- Dan Bigg  
Chicago Recovery Alliance  
Co-Founder and Executive Director  
(1992 - 2018)

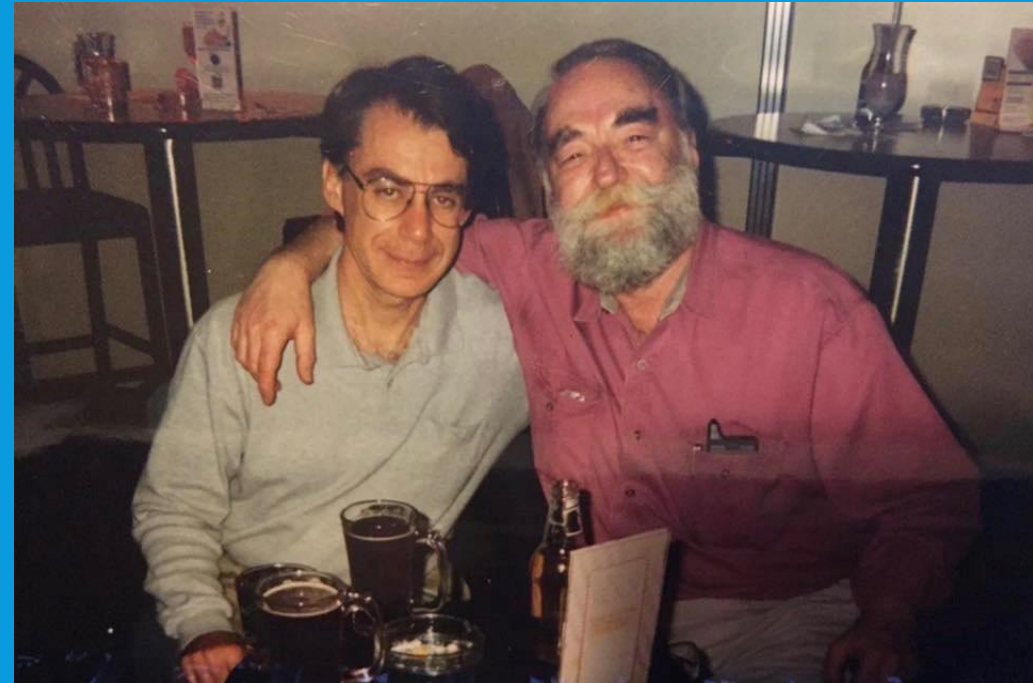


# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Major Players In Harm Reduction:

The Godfather of SSP Research:

- Don C Des Jarlais, PhD  
Professor of Epidemiology,  
Social and Behavioral Sciences  
College of Global Public Health, NYU



Hagan H, Des Jarlais DC, Purchase D, Friedman SR, Reid TR, Bell TA. An interview study of participants in the Tacoma, Washington, syringe exchange. *Addiction*. 1993;88:1691-7.

Hagan H, Jarlais DC, Friedman SR, Purchase D, Alter MJ. Reduced risk of hepatitis B and hepatitis C among injection drug users in the Tacoma syringe exchange program. *Am J Public Health*. 1995;85:1531-7.

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Major Players In Harm Reduction:

The Apostles:

- Harm Reduction Working Group  
1993, San Francisco
- National Harm Reduction Coalition  
1995, D.C.



The group began the challenging task of creating a unified definition of harm reduction. Pictured from left to right first row: Dave Purchase, Rod Sorge, Dan Bigg, Stephanie Comer, Sara Kershner, Charles Collins, Jon Paul Hammond second row: facilitator, Pat Garrett, Ricky Bluthenthal, Renee Edgington, Edith Springer, Joyce Rivera, Lisa Moore third row: Scott Stokes, George Clark, Delia Garcia, Heather Edney, Mark Gerse, Kevin Zeese, Gerald Lenoir

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

## Harm Reduction Timeline

- 1981 (January), Nico Adriaans founded the “Junkiebond” or “Junkie’s Union”. An advocacy and activist drug user group based in Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Junkiebond started an underground needle and syringe programme (NSP) in 1981 with the aim of protecting people who inject drugs from hepatitis B. (<https://idpc.net/news/2017/02/a-brief-history-of-drug-user-self-organisations>)
- 1986 (October), Liverpool, England, the first Syringe Exchange Program is founded by Allan Parry (and associates) - the beginning of the International Harm Reduction Movement”
- 1986 (June), Bern Switzerland opens syringe exchange that evolves into the first safe injection site
- 1987, Russell Newcombe coins the term “harm reduction” to describe a new pragmatic approach being employed in Merseyside (Liverpool), England for engaging PWUD
- 1987 (April) Syringe Exchange becomes the Official Policy of UK Government
- 1988 US Congress Bans use of federal funding to purchase syringes
- 1988 (February) Allan Parry visits NYC and meets Edith Springer, who becomes an early evangelist of HR in the US
- 1988 (August 14) Dave Purchase starts Tacoma Needle Exchange
- 1988 6 SEPs operating in the US
- 1989 North American Syringe Exchange Network starts
- 1991 (August) Francie Comer sees interview of Dave Purchase discussing syringe exchange on MacNeil/Lehrer
- 1991 Dan Bigg and John Szyler Found Chicago Recovery Alliance
- 1991 (November) AmFAR funds 5 SSPs in NYC
- 1992 Spokane County Health District v. Brockett, 120 Wash. 2d 140, 839 P.2d 324 (Wa. 1992).

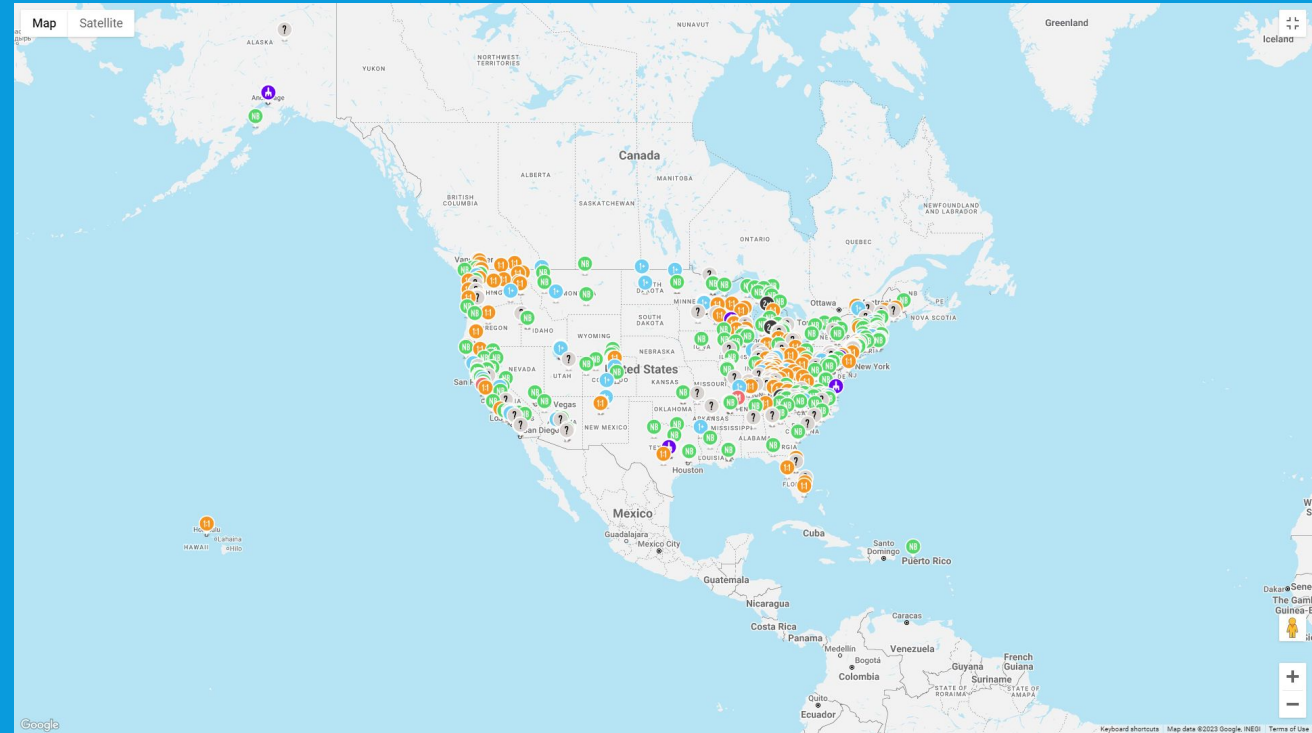
# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

## Harm Reduction Timeline (cont.)

- 1992 Strang and Farrell suggest distributing “ampules of opiate antagonist naloxone” for opioid overdose reversal
- 1993 (August) Comer Family Foundation funds the work of the Chicago Recovery Alliance
- 1993 (October) First meeting of the Harm Reduction Working Group
- 1995 Second meeting of the Harm Reduction Working Group create Harm Reduction Coalition
- 1996 1st Conference of the Harm Reduction Coalition
- 1998 Dan Bigg and Sarz Maxwell start training people in overdose reversal and distributing naloxone to the public
- 2007 New Mexico Passes 911 Good Samaritan Law
- 2009 Obama lifts Federal Ban (House Republicans reinsert restrictive language into the 2012 federal spending bill)
- 2015 Federal Ban on Funding SSPs Lifted - Except funds still cannot be used to purchase syringes
- 2016 Tacoma Needle Exchange Begins Distributing Naloxone
- 2017 Tacoma Needle Exchange Begins Distributing Fentanyl Test Strips
- 2020 (December) Tacoma Needle Exchange Begins Distributing Safer Consumption Supplies e.g., safer smoking supplies
- 2023 (February) Tacoma Needle Exchange Begins distribution of Narcan via Vending Machines
- 2023 (March) Tacoma Needle Exchange Begins Drug Checking Initiative

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

- 1988
  - 6 SSPs in the US
- 1991
  - 12 plus SSPs
- 1995
  - 50 SSPs
- 1997
  - 100 SSPs
- 2023 (February)
  - 495 SEPs\*



\*The NASEN Directory represents approximately 80% of SSPs operating in the US at any given time.

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

## How Are HR Services Delivered at SSPs in the US?:

▪ Brick and Mortar/Storefront	74%
▪ Mobile Unit	58%
▪ Home Delivery	39%
▪ Tent or Outdoor Area	23%
▪ Mail Order	15%
▪ Vending Machine	1%

## Exchange Modalities for SSPs in the US:

▪ Needs-Based	63%
▪ Secondary Exchange	74%
▪ No Residency Requirements	89%
▪ I.D. Not Required	96%

(Data from 2022 DPM Survey of Syringe Service Projects).

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

## Standard Harm Reduction Supplies/Services:

- Past
  - Bleach and water and/or syringes
- Present
  - New Syringes/Syringe Disposal
  - Sterile Water
  - Cotton, Cookers, Tourniquets
  - Alcohol prep pads and impregnated cellulose pads
  - Filters
  - Naloxone/Narcan in person, by mail, and dispensed via vending machine
  - Wound Care supplies, e.g., BZK wipes, coban, petrolatum, gauze, gloves
  - Basic hygiene and menstruation products
  - Resources for people living houseless e.g., tents, sleeping bags, food, clothes
  - Referrals/linkages to wrap around services e.g., MAT, Housing, MH Services, medical services
  - Safer consumption supplies e.g., smoking, snorting, “boofing” i.e., alternatives to injection.
- Future
  - Safe Consumption Spaces a.k.a., overdose prevention centers
  - Decriminalization e.g., Oregon “small amounts of all drugs”
  - Safe supply e.g., drug checking, provider prescribing of pharmaceutical grade drugs



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

How Do We Practice HR at the Tacoma Needle Exchange?:

We provide harm reduction education and sterile drug injection equipment, safer consumption supplies, care coordination, opioid overdose awareness training and naloxone distribution, a no-cost wound care clinic, HIV/HCV testing, access/referral to MAT (low-barrier and traditional), transportation, assistance with benefits enrollment, safer-sex supplies, etc.

- Serve approximately 3200 unique individuals annually with 10-12,000 encounters
  - Storefront Exchange (20 hours)
  - Fixed-site Outreach Exchange 10 hours
  - Deliveries 5 hours
  - Encampment Outreach 5 hours
  - 24 hours safe syringe Disposal (2 Kiosks)
  - Vending Machines (3 units)
- Exchanged 7,147,936 syringes (2019-2021)
- Trained 5000 plus individuals to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose
- Distributed 35,000 doses of naloxone (2016-2022)
  - 3000 Reported Reversals
- Facilitated MAT for more than 400 individuals since 2019
- Provided free diagnosis and treatment of skin and soft tissue infections for more than 300 individuals since 2020.

We provide all services free of charge and in a non-judgmental manner. This fosters the types of relationships that keep PWUD connected to a system of care that they can turn to when they are ready to make positive change.

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Photo Credit: Sam Eaton (2022)



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

2017 Mercedes Sprinter  
(An upgrade over our 1988  
Ford Windstar w/the  
Center Seat Removed)



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE



A drug user displays two blue fentanyl pills she is smoking in downtown Seattle, October 22, 2021.

CREDIT: KUOW PHOTO/ANNA BOIKO-WEYRAUCH



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

- In 2017, TNE started giving out fentanyl test strips so people could *avoid* fentanyl.
- WA Drug User health Data 2019 vs. 2021 (Fentanyl use)
  - In 2019, 18% of WA SSP Health Survey respondents (n=1,269) had used fentanyl in the 90 days prior to the survey. Only one individual reported fentanyl as their “main drug”. (Banta-Green et al., 2020)
  - In 2021, 42% (almost half) of WA SSP Health Survey respondents (n=955) had used fentanyl in the 90 days prior to participating in the survey. Two thirds of these individuals stated that they had used fentanyl “on purpose”. (The remaining third stated they had used it unintentionally and most often mixed with another drug.) Thirty-two (3%) of these individuals reported fentanyl as their “main drug”. (Kingston et al., 2022).
  - In 2021, 48% of individuals that reported using fentanyl in the 90-days prior to the survey reported they only “smoked” fentanyl. (Kingston et al., 2022).

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

- In 2019 n=1065 WA State Syringe Exchange Health Survey respondents reported using methamphetamine “by itself” in the 90-days prior to the survey. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of these individuals reported “smoking” as mode of use. (Banta-Green et al., 2020)
- In 2021, n=822 respondents reported using methamphetamine “by itself” in the 90-days prior to the survey. Eighty percent (80%) reported “smoking” as mode of use. Twenty-eight percent (28%) reported that smoking was their “only” mode of use. An additional 52% reported “smoking and injecting”. (Kingston et al., 2022).

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Standard HR Supplies  
For People-Who-Inject

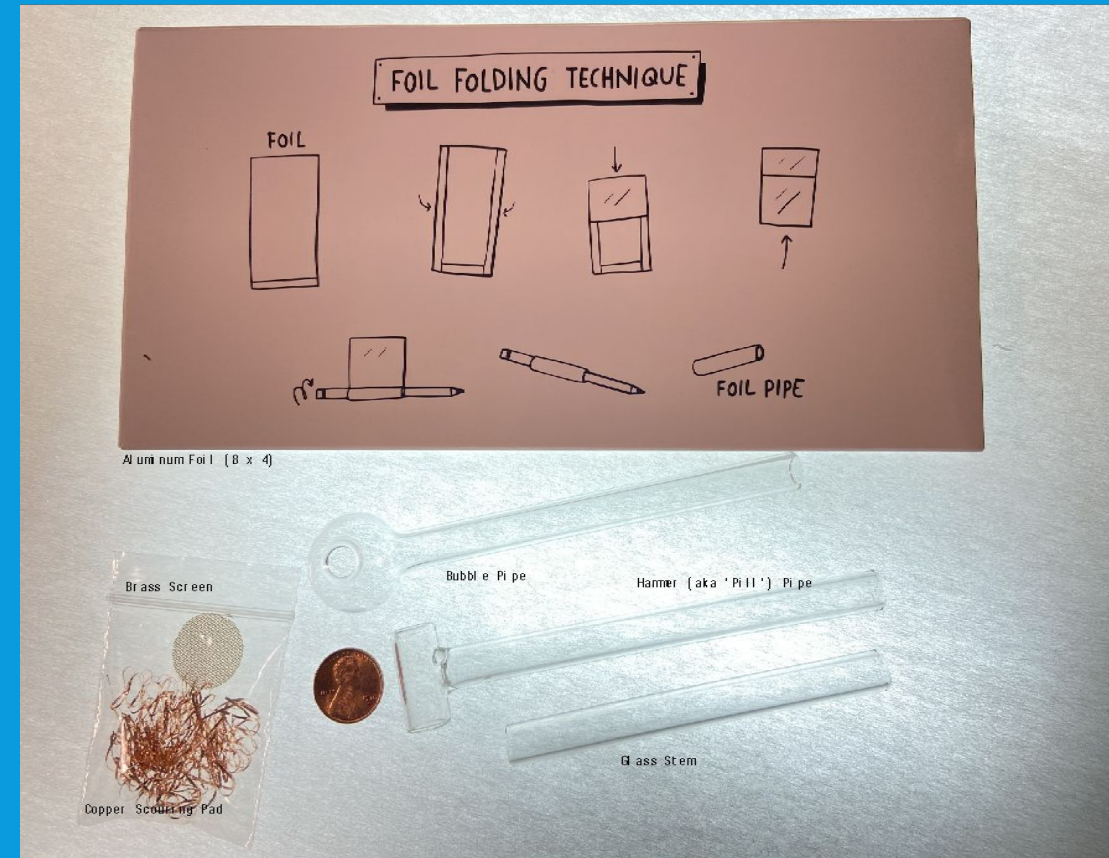
- Single use Syringes
- Alcohol Wipes
- Cotton/Cellulose Filters
- Cookers,
- Sharps Contain
- Sterile Water





# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

- WHAT ARE SAFER SMOKING SUPPLIES?
- Supplies Can Include:
  - Aluminium Foil
  - Hammers, i.e., pill pipes
  - Stems
  - Brass Screens
  - Chore Boy, i.e., copper scouring pads
  - Brillo



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

## SAFER SMOKING SUPPLIES (cont.)

- Stems
- Brass Screens
- Chore Boy, i.e., copper scouring pads
- Brillo
- Manicure Sticks
- Mouthpiece
- Chapstick/Lip Balm
- Gum
- Etc.



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

▪ # New Enrollments at G Street between 12.09.2020 – 12.22.2021	742
▪ # New Enrollees Who Indicated Methamphetamine as drug of choice	466 (63%)
▪ # of Unique Individuals	1237
▪ # of Unique Individuals that Received Safer Smoking Supplies	1163 (94%)
▪ Total # Pipes Distributed	3727
▪ # Participants who returned more than 1 time	569 (49%)
▪ Average # pipes distributed per Outreach Session	58

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

- 3981 Encounters
  - 1672 (39%) No Syringes, Only Safer Smoking Supplies
  - 42 Syringes and Safer Smoking Supplies
    - 1714 (43%) Received Safer Smoking Supplies
- In the 4 weeks prior to distribution of safer smoking supplies we enrolled 20 new participants.
- In the 4 weeks after starting distribution of safer smoking supplies we enrolled 60 new participants, a 200% increase in enrollment - and this was during the last 4 weeks of December, an historically slow time for new enrollments.

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Drug Checking

Started March 2023

Drop-In Tue/Thu 11-3



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

First United  
Methodist Church  
of Tacoma  
621 Tacoma Ave S.  
Tacoma, WA 98402



Tacoma Public Library  
Moore Branch  
215 S. 56th Street  
Tacoma, WA 98408



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Recovery Cafe  
Orting Valley  
113 Varner Ave SE  
Orting, WA 98360



## Opioid Reversal Kit

- 4 (.04ml) Doses of Nasal Naloxone
- CPR Mask
- Gloves
- Printed Instructions
- QR Code Demonstration Video



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Why Provide Harm Reduction Supplies or Services to People Who Don't want to Stop Using Drugs?

- If we don't give PWUD something of tangible value *to them* e.g., supplies, services, etc. we lose the opportunity to engage and educate.
- Because every human deserves compassion and access to the tools necessary to relieve their suffering and the opportunity to make positive change in their lives.



# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

WHAT ARE OUR PARTICIPANTS TELLING US?:

“Safer smoking supplies, and access to them, has helped me feel included in the community. Ostracization has furthered my addiction.”

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

## Contact Information:

Paul LaKosky, PhD.

Executive Director

Dave Purchase Project/Tacoma Needle Exchange

[paul@nasen.org](mailto:paul@nasen.org)

<https://www.davepurchaseproject.org/>

<https://www.tacomaneedleexchange.org/>

# DAVE PURCHASE PROJECT TACOMA NEEDLE EXCHANGE

## References

1. Ritter A, Cameron J. [A review of the efficacy and effectiveness of harm reduction strategies for alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs](#). *Drug Alcohol Rev.* 2006;25(6):611-624. doi:10.1080/09595230600944529
2. Marlatt GA. [Harm reduction: come as you are](#). *Addict Behav.* 1996;21(6):779-788. doi:10.1016/0306-4603(96)00042-1
3. Hawk M, Coulter RWS, Egan JE, et al. [Harm reduction principles for healthcare settings](#). *Harm Reduct J.* 2017;14(1):70. Published 2017 Oct 24. doi:10.1186/s12954-017-0196-4
4. Puzhko S, Eisenberg MJ, Filion KB, et al. [Effectiveness of interventions for prevention of common infections among opioid users: A systematic review of systematic reviews](#). *Front Public Health.* 2022;10:749033. Published 2022 Feb 22. doi:10.3389/fpubh.2022.749033
5. Campbell EM, Jia H, Shankar A, et al. [Detailed transmission network analysis of a large opiate-driven outbreak of HIV infection in the United States](#). *J Infect Dis.* 2017;216(9):1053-1062. doi:10.1093/infdis/jix307
6. Ruiz MS, O'Rourke A, Allen ST, Holtgrave DR, Metzger D, Benitez J, Brady KA, Chaulk CP, Wen LS. [Using interrupted time series analysis to measure the impact of legalized syringe exchange on HIV diagnoses in Baltimore and Philadelphia](#). *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr.* 2019 Dec 1;82 Suppl 2(2):S148-S154. doi: 10.1097/QAI.0000000000002176. Erratum in: *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr.* 2020 Feb 1;83(2):e12.
7. Coye AE, Bornstein KJ, Bartholomew TS, Li H, Wong S, Janjua NZ, Tookes HE, St Onge JE. [Hospital costs of injection drug use in Florida](#). *Clin Infect Dis.* 2021 Feb 1;72(3):499-502. doi: 10.1093/cid/ciaa823
8. Kim SW, Pulkki-Brannstrom AM, Skordis-Worrall J. [Comparing the cost effectiveness of harm reduction strategies: a case study of the Ukraine](#). *Cost Eff Resour Alloc.* 2014;12:25. Published 2014 Nov 24. doi:10.1186/1478-7547-12-25
9. Surratt HL, Otachi JK, Williams T, Gulley J, Lockard AS, Rains R. [Motivation to change and treatment participation among syringe service program utilizers in rural Kentucky](#). *J Rural Health.* 2020;36(2):224-233. doi:10.1111/jrh.12388
10. Nassau T, Kolla G, Mason K, et al. [Service utilization patterns and characteristics among clients of integrated supervised consumption sites in Toronto, Canada](#). *Harm Reduct J.* 2022;19(1):33. Published 2022 Mar 29. doi:10.1186/s12954-022-00610-y