

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**  
**Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC)**

**Bidirectional Referrals Between Substance Use Treatment and Harm Reduction Services**

To submit executed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) as the deliverable for the capacity building payments supporting the cost of developing and negotiating MOUs formalizing partnerships between SAPC-certified harm reduction syringe services programs and SAPC contracted substance use treatment agencies, email each executed MOU to *both*: [harmreduction@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:harmreduction@ph.lacounty.gov) and [sapc-cbi@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:sapc-cbi@ph.lacounty.gov) with the subject “2F-1 Bidirectional Harm Reduction MOU”

**Overview**

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SAPC-contracted substance use treatment provider agencies are eligible to receive capacity building payments for developing formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)-codified partnerships with SAPC-certified harm reduction syringe services programs (collectively “agencies”). These relationships are designed to align with treatment provider agency organizational shifts towards treating patients who may have non-abstinent goals of care and to formalize pathways for bidirectional referrals between substance use treatment agencies and programs certified by SAPC to offer harm reduction services.

SAPC recognizes the historic organizational and programmatic divide that commonly separates substance use treatment programs and harm reduction programs. Coordination of both treatment and harm reduction services will enable SAPC-contracted agencies to better match the continuum of SUD services with patient and community needs.

Agencies obtaining these incentive payments should commit to collaborating toward making the necessary cultural and operational shift in pursuit of coordination of both treatment and harm reduction services for the individuals they serve, as determined by the evolving needs of service recipients. Agency leadership should focus on the following ongoing activities in support of this commitment:

- Maintaining discussions with staff (through individual/supervision/staff meetings, office hours, and other areas of staff supervision and development) to evoke staff’s concerns and perspectives about the provision of harm reduction services for people who may or may not abstain from using intoxicants.
- Agency leadership’s providing clarity that aligns the agency’s strategic direction and staff efforts toward the goal of a comprehensive range of harm reduction and substance use treatment services available for patients and clients (“service recipients”), depending on their continually evolving needs.
- Develop and institute (1) processes that build the continuum of care across harm reduction and substance use treatment providers; (2) methods to evaluate the integration of said services; and (3) measure outcomes accordingly.
- Demonstrate ongoing adjustments that continue to advance this integration approach based on outcomes measured and feedback obtained from staff, harm reduction providers, and service recipients.

**Agencies Certified by SAPC to Provide Harm Reduction Syringe Services**

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SAPC’s Harm Reduction Syringe Services Program (SSP) Certification process is described in an information notice posted on <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/sapc/providers/manuals-bulletins-and-forms.htm?tm#bulletins> (currently [SAPC-IN 22-09 Harm Reduction Syringe Services Program Certification](#)).

[RecoverLA](http://www.recoverla.org/staying_safe/syringe-exchange-also-known-as-needle-exchange) maintains a list of SAPC-certified harm reduction syringe service agencies: [http://www.recoverla.org/staying\\_safe/syringe-exchange-also-known-as-needle-exchange](http://www.recoverla.org/staying_safe/syringe-exchange-also-known-as-needle-exchange).

SAPC-contracted harm reduction syringe service programs are designated as Engagement and Overdose Prevention Hubs (EOP Hubs) and are listed on SAPC’s website: [Click here to view the list of EOP Hubs](#). SAPC EOP Hub agencies are required to obtain and maintain SAPC’s certification as a harm reduction syringe services program.

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Email [HarmReduction@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:HarmReduction@ph.lacounty.gov) with any questions or requests for more information about LA County's harm reduction services or for questions about connecting with an LA County certified harm reduction syringe services provider agency.

**Considerations for Agencies that are SAPC-Contracted Substance Use Treatment Providers and SAPC-Certified as Harm Reduction Syringe Services Programs**

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Agencies that are contracted with SAPC to provide substance use treatment services and are also certified by SAPC to provide harm reduction syringe services may submit documentation describing intra-agency coordination of bidirectional referrals that include the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) components delineated below. These policies and procedures may be credited in lieu of an executed MOU towards the 2F-1 incentive units *only* when they have established MOUs with one fewer than the maximum number of MOUs with external partners listed in the current version of the Capacity Building Package posted in the current Rates and Payment Policy Bulletin (posted via <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/sapc/providers/manuals-bulletins-and-forms.htm?tm#bulletins>)

To illustrate:

- Tier 1 SAPC treatment contractors may submit internal policies and procedures to count toward this incentive when they have already established two MOUs with external harm reduction syringe services programs (thus, the policies and procedures would count in lieu of the **third** MOU).
- Tier 2 SAPC treatment contractors may submit internal policies and procedures to count toward this incentive when they have already established three MOUs with external harm reduction syringe services programs (thus, the policies and procedures would count in lieu of the **fourth** MOU).
- Tier 3 SAPC treatment contractors may submit internal policies and procedures to count toward this incentive when they have already established four MOUs with external harm reduction syringe services programs (thus, the policies and procedures would count in lieu of the **fifth** MOU).

**Required Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Components**

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SAPC requires that a formal, written agreement be in place between SAPC-contracted substance use treatment provider agencies with SAPC-certified harm reduction syringe services programs for this incentive. The written agreement shall include:

**Established Communication Protocol**

- Both parties shall have designated key points of contact within their respective organizations to coordinate communication and collaboration between organizations.
- Both parties have and will continue to arrange and conduct scheduled meetings that advance the aims of this agreement and have designated communication channels established to facilitate ongoing collaboration.

**Established Referral Pathway**

- Both parties shall have organized a clear referral process to connect service participants who are engaging in harm reduction services with substance use treatment services.
- Both parties shall have agreed upon criteria for low-threshold initiation of treatment services that support prompt and efficient linkage of SSP service recipients to substance use treatment available at a treatment agency.

**Care Coordination**

- Both parties shall have established and shall maintain protocols ensuring care coordination for service recipients served by the agencies.

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**Inter-Agency Training**

- Both parties shall have agreed on a plan for staff training that enhances mutual understanding of each of the agencies' respective goals, services, and treatment orientations consistent with the principles of harm reduction.

**Information Security**

- Both parties shall maintain confidentiality protocols compliant with all applicable privacy laws and regulations, including but not limited to HIPAA and 42 CFR Part 2, that maintain confidentiality for patients, family members, and service recipient records.

**Service Recipient Feedback**

- Both parties shall have established a mechanism for obtaining feedback from service recipients regarding their experiences, including but not limited to successes and barriers of receiving services at the agencies.
- The agencies shall use the feedback to improve care coordination and service delivery.

MOUs must be submitted SAPC in order to validate incentive payments that support the cost of developing and negotiating MOUs that formalize partnerships between SAPC-certified SSPs and SAPC-contracted substance use treatment agencies. SAPC-contracted substance use treatment agencies shall submit copies of executed MOUs via email to *both*: [harmreduction@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:harmreduction@ph.lacounty.gov) and [sapc-cbi@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:sapc-cbi@ph.lacounty.gov) with the subject "2F-1 Bidirectional Harm Reduction MOU".