

A Gendered Analysis of Safe Injection Sites

What is a Safe Injection Site?

Safe Injections Sites (SIS) are legally sanctioned facilities where people who inject drugs (PWID) can inject preobtained drugs under the supervision of health care staff.

42 SIS

Currently operate in Canada
located in British Columbia, Quebec,
Ontario and Alberta

Key Aims



Prevent overdose deaths



Facilitate entry into drug treatment services



Reduce disease transmission caused by needle sharing



Reduce public disorder

Vancouver

British Columbia had the first SIS in North America in 2003: Insite



Insite receives an average of 751.3 visits per day and an average of 482.1 injections take place each day

3 SIS in Vancouver



Need for more: predicted that 30-40 PWID leave Insite each day without accessing the injecting room due to long wait times

Gender Barriers



Chart from British Columbia Center of excellence for women's health

1. Assisted Injection



- Women more likely to require
- Canada does not permit within SIS
- Related to high risk of syringe-sharing, HIV, overdose, street or partner violence

2. Violence



- Inter-partner violence is more common among women who inject drugs
- Relationship dynamics can make it difficult for women to access SIS
- In Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, over 60 women have been reported missing or murdered in the past 20 years.

Creating More Inclusive SIS

Canada's first women's only SIS
SisterSpace is located in Vancouver
and sees 50 women a day



Recommendations for current and future SIS



- Addition of women-specific items to harm reduction kits
- Schedule specific times for women only in existing SIS, ensure female staff are present during those times
- Education opportunities on safe injection practices, particularly targeted towards female user
- To better serve all PWID, assisted injection should be considered as a next step in existing and future SIS

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Created by Institute for Health and Social Policy Interns: Jillian Hannah, Victoria Ford & Alyssa Wooster

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