

University of Cincinnati College of Medicine

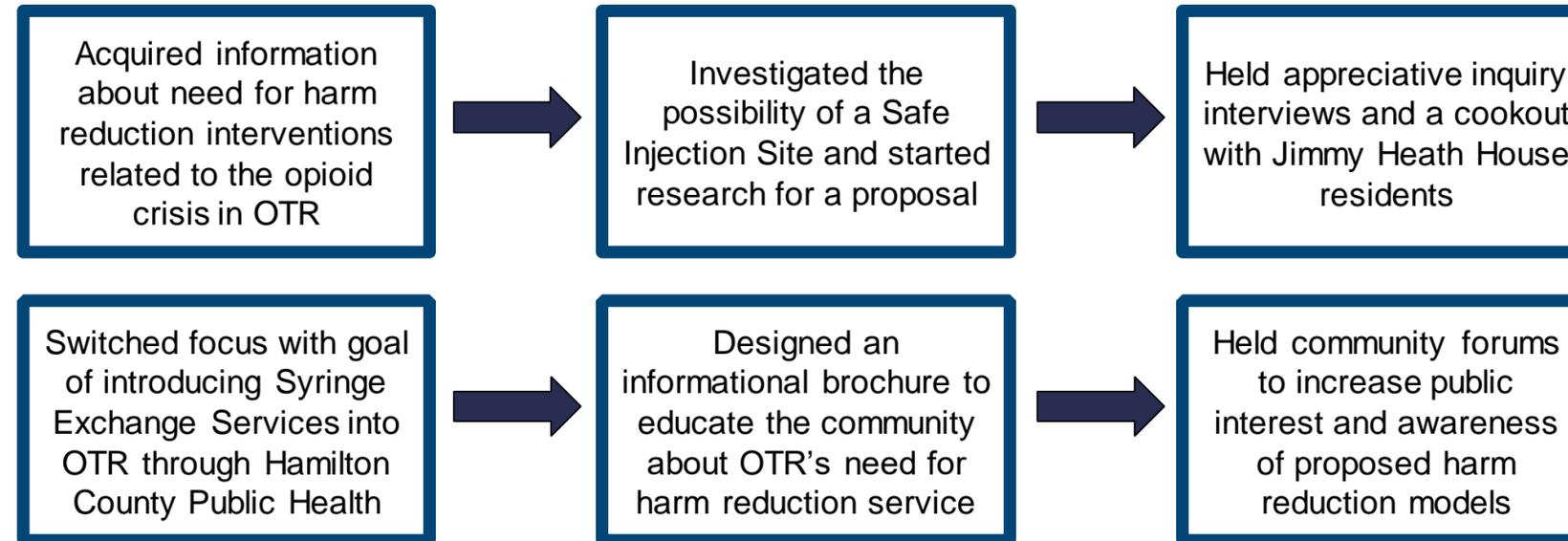
Abstract

This project explores implementing a Syringe Exchange Service (SES) program to address the rising levels of opioid overdoses and spread of infectious diseases in the Over-the-Rhine (OTR) community. The implementation of an SES in OTR is rooted in the concept of harm reduction, an evidence-based set of interventions designed to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with intravenous drug use. In early 2019, we worked with Over-the-Rhine Community Housing (OTRCH) and Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH) to develop a steering committee that discussed details regarding implementation of such a program. We then organized two community forums to increase public interest and public awareness of establishing an SES in OTR. We anticipate that as of June 2019, the syringe exchange van will be operational for the OTR community weekly at Phillipus Church on Thursday mornings.

Introduction

- HCPH reports a total of 190 new HIV cases in Hamilton County in 2018, 60 attributed to intravenous drug use (1).
- A late 2018 CDC report on rising HIV rates in Cincinnati concluded a need to “improve comprehensive syringe services programs,” among other efforts (2).
- We collaborated with OTRCH and the Jimmy Heath House to research harm reduction techniques.
- We developed a plan to apply evidence-based, community-centric techniques toward the shared goal of reducing morbidity and mortality related to opioid use in the community.
- We hope our project serves as a model for other neighborhoods interested in implementing harm reduction programs that addresses the community’s specific needs, anticipates barriers to such programs, and builds lasting relationships with community stakeholders.

Project Milestones



Left image: Flyer for community forum at Findlay Market
 Above image: UCCoMLC 9 members enjoying a meal with JHH residents
 Right image: UCCoMLC 9 members at community forum at Phillipus Church

Results

- Increased understanding of how harm reduction models can improve quality of life for intravenous drug users
- Met with key businesses within OTR to educate about syringe exchange/harm reduction
- Developed a deeper appreciation of housing and access to healthcare resources as a determinant of health
- Established relationships with OTR community stakeholders and increased awareness of harm reduction models
- Anticipated launch date of syringe exchange at Phillipus Church (OTR) in June 2019

Future Steps

- Proceed with introduction of OTR location for Hamilton County Public Health Exchange
- Maintain established relationships in the community to determine future needs and the role of harm reduction in meeting those needs
- Conduct surveys of community members to determine overall impact and community opinion of instituted harm reduction interventions

References and Acknowledgements

- (1) Hamilton County Public Health. HIV Quarterly Report 2018. <https://www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/HIV-Q4-2018.pdf>. Accessed April 3, 2019.
- (2) DeMio, T. Boost access to syringe exchange to curb Cincy HIV spike, CDC tells local health officials. 2018. <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2019/01/22/boost-access-syringe-exchange-curb-cincinnati-hiv-spike-cdc-says/2643539002/>. Accessed April 3, 2019.

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