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SHARPS POLICY & PROCEDURES

Policy:

Community Living-Central Huron is responsible to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees, volunteers and people supported, and therefore will take every reasonable precaution to eliminate risks and hazards related to the use and disposal of medical sharps, Safety Engineered Medical Sharps (SEMS) and other sharp objects. The Agency has developed procedures, including definitions and outlined precautions for all employees and volunteers regarding sharps. Non-compliance with this Policy and Procedures is subject to discipline, up to an including dismissal from Community Living-Central Huron’s employment and/or services.

Purpose:

To emphasize the correct handling of all sharps, to minimize the risk of injury and/or contamination, decrease potential hazards and to increase the awareness of safe work practices related to various types of sharps. Also, to promote and support the health and safety of all employees, volunteers and people supported through training on proper procedures.

A further goal of this policy and procedure is to achieve compliance with relevant legislation: The Occupational Health & Safety Act; the Health Care and Residential Facilities Regulation (O. Reg. 67/93); and the Needle Safety Regulation (O. Reg. 474/07).

Definitions:

Sharps:

Any sharp object, edge or broken article that is capable of cutting or penetrating the skin and could cause injury to the employee, volunteer, person supported or other persons.

Medical Sharps:

Sharp objects used for a person’s medical care, treatment or diagnosis (ie. needles, syringes, blood lancets, auto injectors, etc.).

Safety Engineered Medical Sharps (SEMS):

Sharp medical devices or instruments designed to include safety features to help protect workers from being cut, punctured or injured in some way:

- a) a hollow-bore needle that:
 - is designed to eliminate or minimize the risk of a skin puncture injury or the user, and
 - is licensed as a medical device by Health Canada; or

- b) a needleless device that:
 - replaces a hollow-bore needle, and
 - is licensed as a medical device by Health Canada.

Sharp Objects:

Employees, volunteers and people supported may come in contact with various sharp objects that are capable of cutting or penetrating the skin through everyday activity. Examples of such sharps include, but are not limited to: knives; scissors; lids from aluminum cans; razor blades; pins; chipped or broken tooth; broken glass; etc.

Contamination:

The definition of 'contamination' is within the context of this Policy (Sharps Policy & Procedures). Contamination of a sharp shall mean that the needle, syringe, broken article that is capable of cutting or penetrating the skin has come in contact with any other object prior to administration. For example, contamination occurs if a needle falls on the floor, touches another object such as clothing, blood, dirty laundry, etc. Airborne pathogens, biological and chemical agents are also included as contaminants. Once administered (or encountered), the sharp or broken object must be disposed immediately into a safe container.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Community Living-Central Huron promotes the use of the Internal Responsibility System (IRS) which is a system that encourages self-reliance from within, in which everyone has a direct responsibility for health and safety, and safety is an essential part of their job. Location Health & Safety Representatives (LHSR) have a role to play by monitoring and supporting the IRS. In all matters relating to sharps, health and safety are shared among all employees and volunteers.

The Employer will:

- abide by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Health Care and Residential Facilities Regulations;
- take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of an employee, volunteer and person supported related to risks and hazard with sharps;
- ensure all employees have up-to-date First Aid training and encourage all volunteers to obtain and maintain First Aid certification;
- conduct a Risk Assessment to identify potential hazards related to all sharps, provide controls and re-evaluate the hazard after the control is in place, document such on the RACE Tool - Hazard/Risk Registry;
- provide awareness and education to all employees and volunteers to enforce the Sharps Policies and Procedures;
- ensure appropriate training programs for the various types of sharps: medical, SEMS and other sharp objects to aid in the prevention of illness and injury from sharps;
- monitor all employees and volunteers to ensure they are using safe work practices when handling sharps, including use, storage and disposal;
- provide and maintain necessary equipment, protective devices and resources to ensure safety for employees and volunteers, including providing approved hollow-bore needles that are designed to eliminate or minimize risks;
- ensure, as necessary, site-specific written protocols are in place related to sharps, more specifically, when injury, punctured skin or contamination occurs due to a needle stick from a medical sharp or a SEMS;
- investigate and respond in writing to all Employee Incident Reports and Workplace Hazard & Suggestion Reports related to injury, illness or accidents related to sharps;
- review at least once a year the Agency's Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Procedures for the health and safety of employees and volunteers related to sharps and to revise such as required, based on current legislation;

- in consultation with Location Health and Safety Representatives, develop, establish and provide training and educational programs related to sharps.
- provide and/or arrange for training, education on the use of sharps for people supported, as required or appropriate.

The Supervisor will:

- abide by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Health Care and Residential Facilities Regulations;
- ensure all employees and volunteers are trained in the safe use of sharps to reduce the risk of illness, injury and exposure to blood and body fluids;
- ensure all new employees and volunteers receive general and site-specific orientation to the Sharps Policy and Procedure and all site-specific protocols related to sharps;
- ensure employees have valid First Aid certification and encourage volunteers to have the same;
- include use of, storage and disposal of sharps, as part of their regular workplace audit; and provide employees, volunteers and people supported with corrective measures as required;
- develop, as required, site-specific written protocol for all aspects of medical sharps and SEMS; such protocol to include training, proper usage techniques, precautions, storage and disposal;
- ensure employees, volunteers and people supported take every reasonable precaution including using protective devices and equipment, ensuring proper storage and disposal procedures, as required by the Occupational Health & Safety Act; the Health Care and Residential Facilities Regulation and the Agency's Health & Safety Policies and Procedures;
- investigate and respond to all reports of hazards, risks, safety concerns and incidents related to the use of sharps.

The Location Health and Safety Representative will:

- abide by the Occupational Health and Safety Act; the Health Care and Residential Facilities Regulations; and the Agency's Health & Safety Policy and Procedures;
- participate in training and educational programs related to sharps, as determined by the Employer;
- in consultation with the Employer establish necessary training and educational programs related to sharps;
- immediately report all hazardous or unsafe conditions related to sharps to their Supervisor and encourage co-workers to do the same using the Workplace Hazard and Suggestion Report;
- review location Workplace Hazard and Suggestion Reports and make written recommendations back to the Employer that will assist in eliminating, controlling and reducing hazards and risks related to sharps;
- abide by site-specific written protocol for medical sharps and SEMS;
- include sharps as part of the monthly workplace inspection;
- accompany a Ministry of Labour Inspector during an inspection visit;
- investigate work refusals.

Employees will:

- comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act; the Health Care and Residential Facilities Regulations and the Agency's Health & Safety Policy and Procedures;
- participate in training and educational programs related to sharps, as determined by the Employer;
- exercise safe work practices at all times with regard to the use, storage, and disposal of all types of sharps;
- immediately report to their Supervisor, using the Workplace Hazard and Suggestion Report all concerns related to unsafe work practices related to sharps;
- maintain current First Aid certification;
- ensure they are aware of instructions, precautions and proper techniques when utilizing all equipment and protective devices related to sharps;
- abide by site-specific written protocol for medical sharps and SEMS;
- immediately report to their Supervisor any use of non-safety engineered medical sharps which have not been previously approved for use by the Employer;
- immediately report to their Supervisor or designate, the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device of which the worker is aware and which may endanger themselves or others using a Workplace Hazard and Suggestion Report;

Procedures/Precautions for Medical Sharps and SEMS:

Each work location where medical sharps and SEMS are used or otherwise present shall develop site-specific procedures outlining the use and disposal of the products as appropriate and in keeping with the following general provisions:

- All needles and sharps shall be handled and disposed of in a manner that will not endanger the health and safety of users or others;
- it is the responsibility of the Employee to ensure appropriate handling and safe disposal of medical sharps and SEMS;
- needle-less products and products with inherent safety features shall be used when such alternatives are available;
- needles will not be recapped, bent or removed or otherwise manipulated by hand;
- discard needles and syringes immediately after use, to the appropriate sharps container;
- never discard sharps into bags of biological waste or regular trash;
- uncapped needles or other medical sharps must not be left unattended or covered with a towel, blanket, etc.;
- all used needles; syringes; blood lancets, etc. are to be placed/dropped directly into a labeled designated "Sharps" container; this container must be labeled "bio-hazardous materials" and the container must be large enough to hold several used sharps;
- the sharps disposal container is checked regularly, to ensure it is not filled beyond capacity and a replace container is readily available;
- full sharps containers are disposed of at the designated pharmacy;
- all needles and medical sharps shall be disposed of properly in appropriate sharps containers by the person who used the device;
- all sharps injuries must be immediately reported to the Supervisor or designate. Medical attention will be sought as appropriate for such injuries.

Procedure for Sharps/Needlestick injury or Body Fluid Splash:

- immediately squeeze the injured area to promote bleeding, if it is a medical or SEMS injury;
- treat the wound using First Aid measures and then seek medical attention, take WSIB forms with you when you seek medical attention;
- if a body fluid splash, flush thoroughly with soap and water;
- report the incident immediately to your Supervisor or designate;
- Complete the Employee Incident Report; ensure completion of WSIB forms;
- Contact the Administrative Coordinator, Human Resources/Finance;
- Complete a Communique if person supported sustains a needle stick.

Procedure for injuries from Sharp Objects:

Depending on the nature of the injury, various factors are to be considered when an employee, volunteer or person supported is requiring treatment. Is injury a cut, skin punctured or sharp object embedded in the skin, etc. A minor cut may only require first aid, where if a larger object has punctured the skin and stitches are required, immediately go to the nearest Emergency Department; other circumstances may require contacting 911 immediately. Below are examples/considerations:

- if the skin was punctured or cut;
- if an object is protruding from the skin;
- the size and type of sharp object;
- the location of the injury on your body;
- the force in which the injury was inflicted;

Reporting and Investigation:

It is the responsibility of all employees and volunteers to immediately report all potential risk factors for hazards/incidents to their immediate Supervisor or designate using the Employee Incident Form and/or the Workplace Hazard & Suggestion Report. The Supervisor will investigate risks/hazards/incidents as soon as possible and take appropriate steps to address any continuing risk to the health, safety and well being of all employees, volunteers and people supported. Should a hazard result in a critical injury or fatality, Supervisors, employees and Location Health and Safety Representatives will follow the Agency's Critical Injury Policy (#D-006) .

Evaluation:

Community Living-Central Huron is committed to looking at leading indicators of injuries from sharps, through surveys to employees and volunteers, and providing continuing education and awareness as necessary. Supervisors will regularly audit practices of employees, volunteers and people supported to minimize the risk of injury from sharps. The Committee of Location Health and Safety Representatives will review statistics and incidents of illness or injury due to handling of sharps.

Related Policies:

- Duty of Care Policy (No. B-010)
- Critical Injury (No. D-006)
- Annual Workplace Maintenance Policy (D-009)
- Musculoskeletal Disorders Awareness Policy (D-010)
- First Aid Policy and Procedures (D-011)
- Working Alone Policy (D-012)
- Hazard/Risk Policy and Procedures (D-014)
- Health and Safety Orientation Policy (D-015)
- Location Health and Safety Representative Policy (D-016)
- Employee and Volunteer Orientation Policy (E-005)
- Professional Development/Training Policy (E-006)
- Employee Performance Standards (E-011)
- Disciplinary Policy (E-012)
- Early and Safe Return to Work (E-016)
- Community Living-Central Huron Medication Policy and Procedures Manual