

# Smoking Supplies: The Local Public Health Perspective on an Emerging Harm Reduction Strategy

## Frequently Asked Questions



The distribution of smoking supplies has emerged as a promising harm reduction strategy to engage people who use drugs, reduce overdoses, and prevent infectious diseases. In March 2023, NACCHO conducted a survey to better understand the implementation of smoking supplies, including the impact and benefits, factors that support this work, and barriers that undermine it. On July 31st, NACCHO shared the results of the survey and two organizations, The Phoenix Center and Public Health Madison & Dane County, shared their experience with implementing smoking supplies. This document summarizes frequently asked questions from participants throughout the webinar.

### Technical Questions

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**1. Will these slides be available afterwards?**

Yes, you can find the webinar [slides](#) and [recording](#) here.

**2. Can these photos be made available somewhere? I'm always trying to talk to journalists about using less stigmatizing imagery when covering our issues.**

Yes. To access the photos shared by Public Health Madison & Dane County, contact [overdoseprevention@publichealthmdc.com](mailto:overdoseprevention@publichealthmdc.com)

### Funding Questions

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**1. Is there any funding available for these harm reduction supplies?**

Speakers reported using their injection drug use or syringe services programs grants, as well as organizational, unrestricted funding.

**2. Can the speakers share vendor information when you send out slides?**

Speakers reported purchasing supplies from the NASEN buyers club (North American Syringe Exchange Network), McKesson, and SmokeWorks.

### Equipment Questions

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**1. Are there any good "how to" resources/videos on using the hammer pipe?**

Contact [overdoseprevention@publichealthmdc.com](mailto:overdoseprevention@publichealthmdc.com) to access the materials used by Public Health Madison & Dane County.

**2. Can you explain the benefits of an acidifier please? This is a new item to me.**

In order to inject substances such as crack cocaine or "black tar" heroin, the user must dissolve the solid crystals in an acidic solution. Common acidifiers include vitamin C, citric acid, lemon juice, and vinegar. However, it is important to note that lemon juice and vinegar, while more widely available, are harsher acids that may cause more pain, irritation, and damage to veins. See this [document](#) for more information on acidifiers.

**3. Can you link to the supplier used for the acidifier?**

We get it from [McKesson](#), through [NASEN \(North American Syringe Exchange Network\) buyers club](#).

#### **4. Why are hammer pipes so hard to keep in stock?**

Several survey respondents shared that they face supply chain issues, as there are so few manufacturers of hammer pipes. Others shared that while participants are interested in hammer pipes, the demand isn't quite high enough to order them in bulk.

#### **5. According to clients at our SSP, the copper ball chore is not the ideal chore. They prefer the steel chore. I have been told that the copper is flammable and can break into copper embers while smoking. Are there suggestions you can give to clients that want to avoid hurting themselves with the copper embers?**

We offer brass filters, but it seems that people we see tend to like the copper filter. We offer a mouthpiece in the hopes that it prevents embers. (Public Health Madison & Dane County)

#### **6. Do you prepackage the kits or does the consumer select what they want?**

We prepackage safer injection kits (cotton balls, alcohol wipes, tourniquet, cooker, cooker holder), and fentanyl test strip kits (instructions, strips, and sterile water tubes), but other things are not in packages. People "shop" for what they need. (Public Health Madison & Dane County)

## **Questions Relating to Smoking Supplies Demand**

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#### **1. How are people limiting smoking supplies distribution while not only having high demand but also having to meet the need for supply and deepening engagement with the community?**

This was an issue raised by many survey respondents. Most organizations that distribute smoking supplies are forced to limit distribution of supplies, in particular pipes, to just 1 or a few per person per visit/week. The speakers from Public Health Madison & Dane County shared that their approach is to limit distribution to 2 straight pipes, 1 chore, 1 bubble pipe, and 1 hammer pipe per person.

#### **2. How do you keep up with the high demand of smoking supplies? We run a mobile site 4 days a week and see anywhere from 40-100 people in 3 hours and are trying to balance getting people supplies they need while also having time to have important conversations with people, make referrals, etc. We have started to bundle certain supplies such as 4 stems/2 chores.**

This is an issue that many survey respondents shared. Speakers from Public Health Madison & Dane County shared, "I know the frustration, especially since we have SSP offices and no mobile outlets yet. People like to come in and out quickly. We made a Safer Drug Use brochure that fits in your pocket. We try to engage (or at least have a conversation icebreaker) by handing these out."

## **Community Engagement Questions**

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#### **1. Many survey respondents and speakers from both The Phoenix Center and Public Health Madison & Dane County shared that they saw an increase in the number of Black clients and other clients of color after they began to distribute smoking supplies. For increasing engagement with the Black community, did either presenter work to engage the population directly or was the increase due to word of mouth after smoking supplies were added?**

According to Public Health Madison & Dane County, "We knew the Black community tended to smoke rather than inject, so we met their needs when we started to distribute pipes." Both The Phoenix Center and Public Health Madison & Dane County shared that word of mouth played an important role. Public Health Madison & Dane County shared, "We also try to reach Black communities specifically for drug overdose prevention and harm reduction as much as we can."

**2. How long have you been distributing smoking supplies and are you seeing overdose rates rising slower for Black community members since implementation (recognizing overdose rates likely increase across groups)?**

Both The Phoenix Center and Public Health Madison & Dane County started distributing smoking supplies in the past few years so they have not been able to document decreases in overdose rates or inequities yet.

## **“Next Step” Questions**

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**1. Is NACCHO drafting a toolkit with recommendations supporting smoking supplies?**

NACCHO plans to develop tools and resources to support this harm reduction strategy. Contact Kat Kelley ([kkelley@naccho.org](mailto:kkelley@naccho.org)) with any suggested or requested tools.

## **Miscellaneous Questions**

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**1. In my area, people are working hard to dispel the myth that the marijuana supply contains fentanyl. The Medical Examiner’s office says that the combustion of marijuana destroys any fentanyl that may be present. So, if high heat from burning marijuana destroys fentanyl, how is it possible to smoke fentanyl without destroying it?**

A recent article in Filter magazine titled “[The Pernicious Myth of Fentanyl-Laced Cannabis](#)” discusses this topic. In short, fentanyl and marijuana are vaporized at different temperatures, and consequently fentanyl would not be vaporized/inhaled at the temperatures at which marijuana is vaporized/inhaled.