Las Vegas Installs Nation's First Syringe Vending Machines

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Las Vegas health officials recently installed the United States' first public syringe vending machines, which will automate the dispensing of clean needles, safe sex kits and first aid supplies for drug users at three sites across the city, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reports.

The vending machine initiative, also known as a storefront syringe program, or SSP, is a joint effort between the Nevada AIDS Research and Education Society, the Southern Nevada Health District and the Southern Nevada Harm Reduction Program and aims to offer local drug users a low-pressure way of obtaining safe injection equipment and reducing their risk of HIV, hepatitis C virus (HCV) and other blood-borne infections.

The machines, which resemble typical snack dispensers, will be available at the following sites in Las Vegas by the end of May: Trac-B Exchange, Aid for AIDS Nevada and the Community Counseling Center.

Each vending machine will come equipped with syringe safety kits containing clean needles and disposal boxes for dirty supplies and kits for wound cleaning and safe sex. In order to use the SSPs, users will have to first register to receive a swipe card that will allow them to receive up to two kits per week. The Community Counseling Center will even have a case manager on hand to assist with use of the machine and provide individuals with any other services they require, including finding treatment.

Although these are the first syringe vending machines to launch in the United States, proponents of the initiative note that SSPs have been utilized to combat the spread of infectious diseases in Europe and Australia for more than a decade.

Public vending machines dispense clean needles, safe sex kits and first aid supplies.Courtesy of Trac-B Exchange

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