



# CITY OF COSTA MESA

CALIFORNIA 92628-1200

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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

June 19, 2018

Carol Crump  
California Department of Public Health  
Office of AIDS  
1616 Capitol Avenue STE 616  
MS7700  
Sacramento, CA 95814-7402

Subject: Orange County Needle Exchange Application

Dear Ms. Crump,

I'm concerned that the health and safety of Costa Mesa residents will be put at serious risk by Orange County Needle Exchange Program (OCNEP)'s proposal to distribute syringes in the City of Costa Mesa.

OCNEP may be well-meaning, but the organization has a poor track record elsewhere. In fact OCNEP's permit was revoked in Santa Ana after substantial increases in used syringes were witnessed by city officials. Santa Ana officials have confirmed that OCNEP neglected to pursue any pro-active needle collections. Indeed their city is now facing legal claims from several employees and contractors who were pricked by discarded needles.

OCNEP's application is incorrect and incomplete. The application fails to list several homeowner and residents' associations located in the needle distribution area, which includes single family homes, apartments and several mobile home parks. In addition, an elementary school, with a PTA, is located immediately north of the area on the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Whittier Avenue, prompting Newport-Mesa Unified School District to write a letter in opposition to the proposed program. Costa Mesa also has an active Chamber of Commerce, which includes businesses in the needle distribution area.

Section VI,e of OCNEP's application states that they have "incorporated suggestions and concerns of community members." However, to our knowledge, OCNEP pursued little to no outreach in the City of Costa Mesa. In fact, we only learned about the OCNEP's application through media accounts. What efforts, if any, did OCNEP make to solicit "suggestions and concerns of community members" in Costa Mesa?

Costa Mesa is already home to the largest concentration of rehab homes in the county. We are already inundated with discarded needles. Introducing more into our community would be reckless and dangerous to our residents who run the risk of being pricked by a used needle.

Finally, I question how well OCNEP has thought out this program. OCNEP proposes to dispense needles from a van in a loosely identified area. Will this be conducted on private property or on a public street? Street parking is at a premium in the area selected. If the plan is to conduct the program on public streets, what if no street parking is available? If on private property, at what site and with whose permission? How will OCNEP ensure that streets and sidewalks are not blocked by the van, by refuse disposal containers, or by clients? How will this be monitored? How can OCNEP ensure that they won't pose a traffic hazard to automobiles, pedestrians, and/or bicyclists?

As the mayor of Costa Mesa, I must make the safety and security of our residents, workforce and visitors my highest priority. Based on OCNEP's track record in Santa Ana, their lack of outreach in Costa Mesa, and their lack of clear delineation of functional aspects of the program, I have serious doubts about OCNEP's ability to conduct the proposed program without creating a threat to public health and safety in our city. I urge you to deny this poorly conceived proposal to distribute syringes in our city.

Sincerely,



Sandra L. Genis  
Mayor of Costa Mesa

Cc:

**Dr. Karen Mark**  
Chief of the Office of Aids  
California Department of Health

**Dr. Karen Smith**  
Director & State Public Health Officer  
California Department of Health

**Susan Fanelli**  
Chief Deputy Director of Policy and Programs  
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