



NHSPC

National Health and Safety Policy Committee

April 2024

The National Health and Safety Policy Committee held a virtual meeting at the end of March. Here are some issues that were discussed.

Prison Needle Exchange Program

Once again, there was heated discussion concerning the PNEP. At last, there was someone from the health sector to answer our questions. Following months-long efforts on our part, the employer committed to send us the list of criteria used to determine if a site would host a PNEP or an OPS. To our surprise, the employer announced that Dr. Leonard was continuing her research to evaluate the OPS and PNEP. Another researcher, Dr. Kronfli, continues her research, entitled "Enhancing uptake of needle and syringe programs in Canadian federal prisons." UCCO-SACC-CSN raised concerns regarding Dr. Kronfli's research goals and questionable approach because, for example, she has refused to meet with one of our advisors. The employer's response about this research has been opaque, cryptic, and obtuse. UCCO-SACC-CSN has requested the employer's feedback on a report about the Bowden's infrastructure for the program. The report was submitted more than 16 months ago. The employer did not seem to know what we were talking about. We reminded them the report was handed directly to the Commissioner.

Respiratory Protection Program Update

The employer is working with a consultant to review the Respiratory Protection Program. The employer recognizes that the current Z94.4 standard and its requirement to be clean-shaven are causing issues. With the help of an industrial hygienist, the goal is to review current hazards, potential infrastructure changes, and personal protective equipment (PPE) to come to fact-based decisions. UCCO-SACC-CSN is actively involved in this process, with a view to finding the most appropriate PPE for all our members.

Institutional Cleaning

The employer recognizes that this is an issue for all employees. The problem seems to be a lack of funding. Funds were available for cleaning during the pandemic, but no longer are. CSC is actively trying to secure funding for this purpose.

Seat Belts in Security Escort Vehicles

After lengthy discussions, seat belts for inmates will be installed in new escort vehicles. The seat belt will be like the ones found in airplanes. It was agreed that inmates would buckle up on their own. A security bulletin on this subject will be issued shortly.

Test Strip Distribution

CSC announced that it will distribute test strips to inmates for fentanyl, benzodiazepine, and xylazine. The strips are already available in Overdose Prevention Sites. Distribution will be extended to all CSC institutions.

Footwear Hazard Assessment and Market Analysis

UCCO-SACC-CSN has updated the footwear-hazard assessment and market analysis, as the previous version dated from 2014. We presented the employer with our updated analysis and await their response. Given the inflation of recent years, we expect the allocation to increase.

In solidarity,

Your NHSPC representatives