



**Public Health**  
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Canton City Public Health

# Canton City Public Health 2023 Syringe Services Program Annual Report



This report provides an update of the Canton City Public Health (CCPH) Syringe Services Program (SSP) as required by Ohio law, Ohio Revised Code 3707.57. The SSP is a program that provides syringe exchange services in the County of Stark, in the City of Canton. This report outlines all aspects of the program including the distribution and receipt of syringes. This report does not account for other sources of syringes (prescription or nonprescription) available in the county. The data in this report is taken from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.

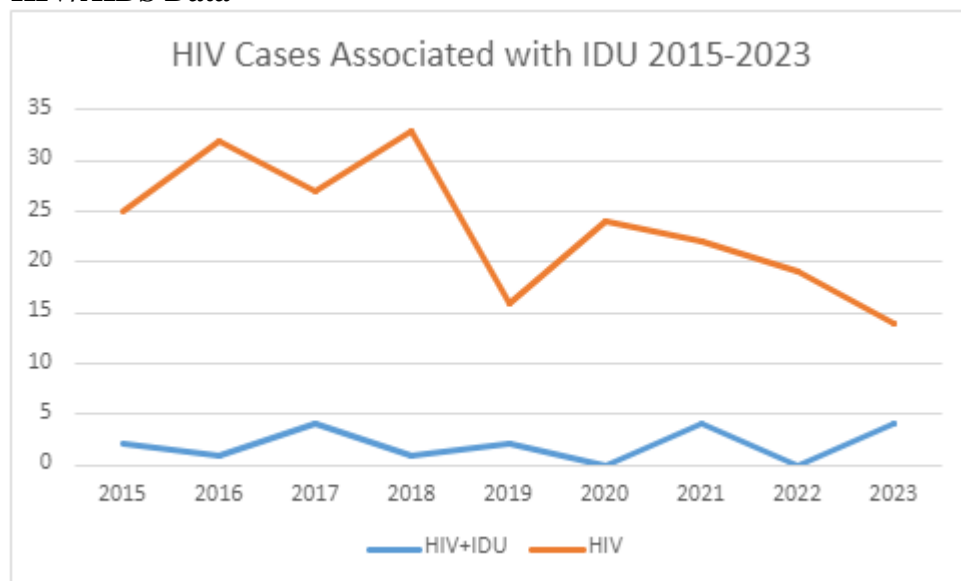
On June 23, 2017, CCPH began administering the SSP known as SWAP (Stark Wide Approach to Prevention). The goal of SWAP is to protect and promote the County of Stark resident's health and safety by preventing the spread of infectious diseases associated with injection drug use, and by decreasing the number of improperly disposed syringes in the community. The goal is addressed through four major components of the program: 1) Syringe exchange/linkage and referral; 2) Syringe disposal and community cleanup; 3) Harm reduction/safer injection education 4) Community awareness and education.

Syringe exchange has been documented to be a public health intervention that reduces transmission of blood-borne pathogens and reduces the number of improperly discarded syringes in the community. CCPH utilizes a harm reduction approach by providing people who inject drugs (PWID) with new syringes, and a place to safely dispose of used syringes. The program also provides referrals and linkage to substance abuse/mental health treatment and medical services. Syringe access programs provide an essential link to health services for uninsured and marginalized populations that do not have access to traditional health care.

Several other aspects of the program were developed and enhanced since its inception. The SWAP program provides additional services including Narcan distribution, HIV and Hepatitis C rapid testing, administration of Hepatitis A and B vaccinations, seasonal flu vaccinations, and wound care evaluation, treatment and education. Education includes verbal and printed information on HIV, hepatitis, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), overdose prevention and wound care, encouraging one-time use of needles, and safe injection practices. External referrals include drug and alcohol treatment, medical care, mental health care, domestic violence, food, clothing, and shelter.

The SWAP Planning Group is an Ad Hoc Committee of the Stark County Opiate Task Force and consists of stakeholders including recovery, counseling and support service agencies, a family support and advocacy agency and other content experts concerning syringe exchange, disease control and drug treatment who meet on a quarterly basis. This planning group provides insight and guidance to SWAP while mitigating negative perceptions of the program. CCPH staff works collaboratively with law enforcement to maintain an open dialogue regarding syringe exchange and other substance abuse issues.

**REDUCING TRANSMISSION OF DISEASE**  
**HIV/AIDS Data**



Incidence of HIV/AIDS cases diagnosed in Stark County. Source: <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/knownour-programs/hiv-aids-surveillance-program/resources/stark-county-hiv-surveillance-data-tables> Apart from the most recent year being data from the Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS). Note: IDU associated exposure are inclusive of total case count per year. (Ex: Stark County had 27 cases of HIV in 2017, with 4 of those cases reporting an IDU associated exposure).

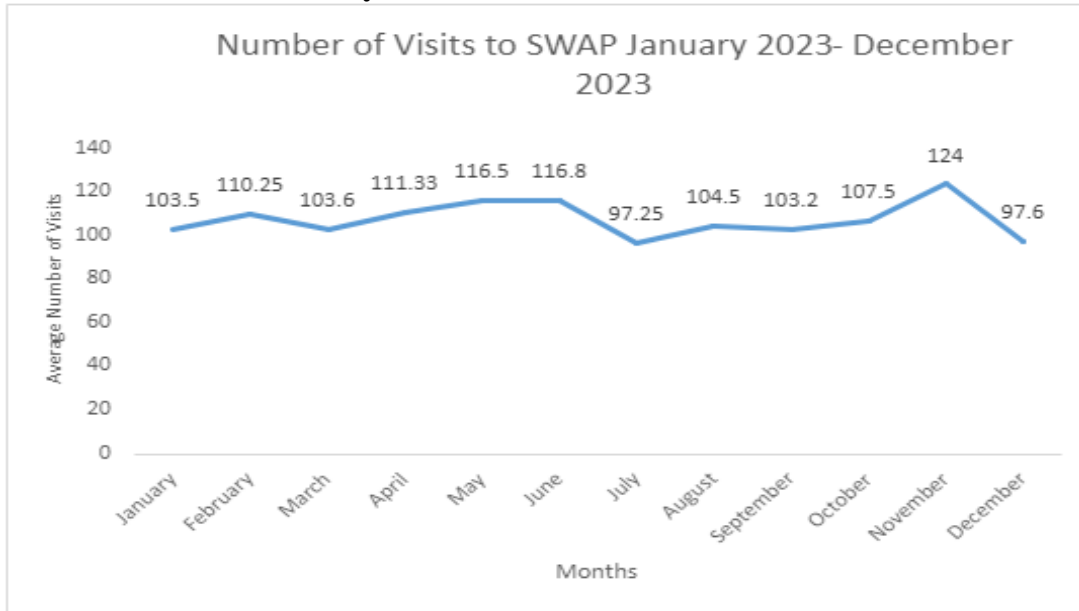
The table below summarizes newly reported cases of chronic Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS among Stark County residents from 2016 through 2023. HIV/AIDS case reporting generally takes at least 6 months to be considered complete, and all case data is subject to change as more information is collected.

Conditions by Year of Diagnosis Stark County Residents (2016-2023)								
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Hepatitis C</b>	344	306	313	322	207	*	192	182
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	32	27	33	16	24	22	19	14
<b>HIV/AIDS with IDU Exposure</b>	1	4	2	2	0	4	0	4

\*Due to the COVID pandemic, unable to provide up-to-date Hepatitis C data

We are hopeful that the decline in Hepatitis C cases since 2016 may be in some way attributed to the implementation of SWAP in 2017.

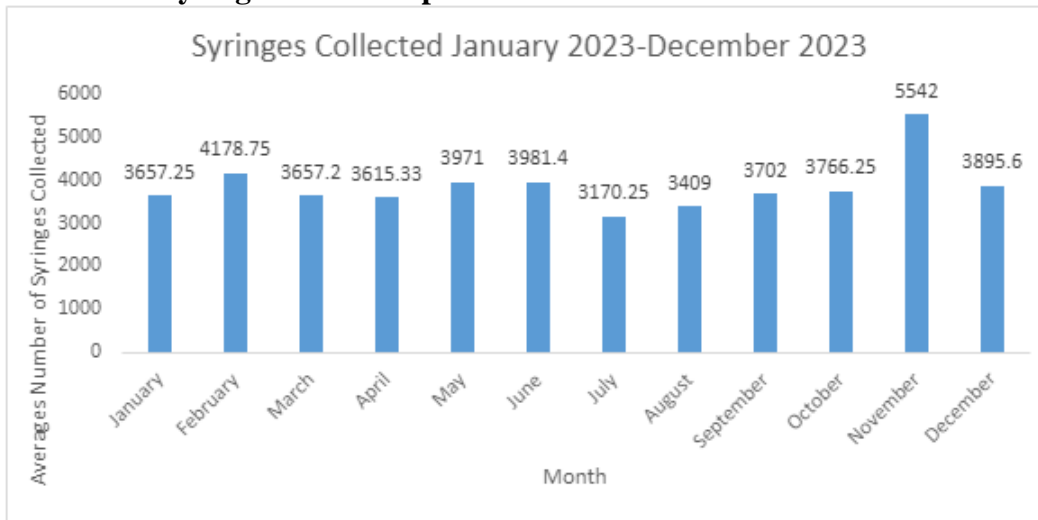
**SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAM – SWAP**  
**Number of SWAP Visits by Month of Visit**



<sup>1</sup>Average number of visits per month calculated based on total visits in month divided by the weeks SWAP was opened in that same month.

From January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, there were 5,246 visits to SWAP in 49 nonconsecutive weeks. At least 210 individuals self-identified as a new client. Of those 210 individuals, it's a possibility some of those client codes were repeats. There were also 131 new codes that were unduplicated but did not self-identify as new. The month of November averaged the most clients per visit while July was the lowest.

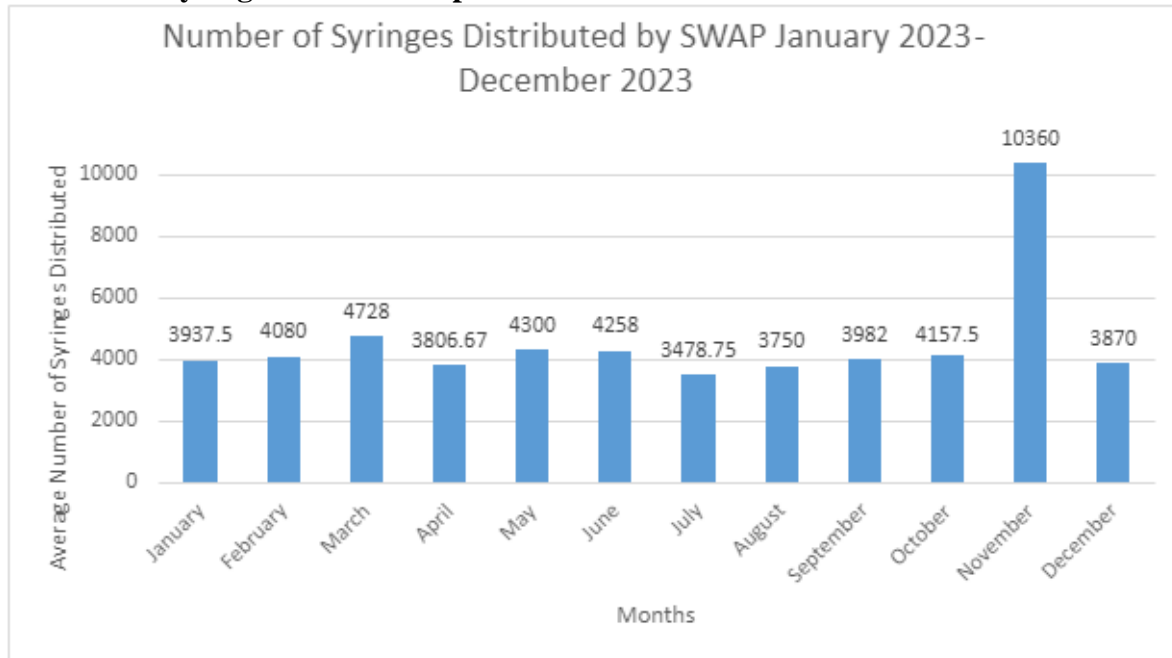
**Number of Syringes Collected per Month**



<sup>1</sup>Average number of syringes collected calculated based on total syringes collected in month divided by the weeks SWAP was opened in that same month.

The above data indicates that from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, SWAP collected 186,721 used syringes. The lowest average number of syringes collected was in July with the highest in November.

## Number of Syringes Distributed per Month



<sup>1</sup>Average number of syringes distributed calculated based on total syringes distributed in month divided by the weeks SWAP was opened in that same month.

The table above indicates the number of new syringes distributed monthly from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. SWAP distributed 211,145 sterile syringes in 2023. The lowest average number of syringes were distributed in July with the highest in November. SWAP was closed for 3 weeks in 2023 due to observed Federal Holidays on April 7<sup>th</sup>, November 10<sup>th</sup>, and November 24<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, the program distributed two weeks’ worth of supplies the week prior to the closures.

## New Developments

SWAP continued the text alert program for interested clients so that important information about SWAP and overdoses in the area can be sent directly to participants. In 2023, the program sent out 18 mass texts. There were 5 alerts regarding increases in local overdoses, 10 alerts of SWAP closures or changes in procedures, and 3 alerts about general promotions. Participation in the text alert program is completely voluntary and anonymous.

SWAP partnered with a local agency beginning in 2021 to pre-pack harm reduction bags. This bag is given to each SWAP participant, along with sterile syringes, which includes 10 alcohol pads, 10 band aids, 5 antibacterial ointments, 3 gauze pads, 1 bar of soap, 3 tourniquets, and 3 sterile cookers, a 2” x 3” plastic bag of numerous sterile cotton filters, and 1 roll of medical tape. These sterile, single-use harm reduction supplies are given out to help prevent disease transmission and reduce the potential health risks associated with substance use.

In 2023, SWAP added a Peer Support Specialist from Stark County’s Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities Agency (TASC). The Peer Support Specialist helped 49 individuals sign up for the 3 harm reduction vending machines in Alliance, Massillon, and Canton. They also provided resources about peer support or treatment to multiple individuals, but no direct links were made.

OhioCAN is a grass roots 501(C)(3) organization made up of a diverse group of individuals who have lost a child(ren), have a child(ren) struggling, are raising a grandchild(ren), or celebrate recovery themselves or through a child. OhioCAN takes a harm reduction approach while working with families and friends of substance users. The organization offers a variety of programs, services, and information such as kinship and family support groups and *YouCAN2*© (blessing bags) to detox, inpatient, and recovery homes along with people experiencing homelessness. OhioCAN personnel have provided fresh grilled cheese and other snacks to SWAP participants for the past 7 years.

Donations are collected internally at CCPH, just before the winter holidays, to hand out warm socks for SWAP participants. External donors have also provided an abundant amount of winter socks, hats, scarves, and gloves for clients. Individuals interested in donating can access a SWAP Amazon Wishlist, with a direct link on the SWAP webpage listed here <https://www.cantonhealth.org/nursing/?pg=493>, to purchase various harm reduction and hygiene necessities such as feminine pads, shampoo, thermal blankets, and more.

Volunteers from Smart Recovery and Center for Hope and Healing have participated in passing out popcorn, winter essentials, and other necessities packed into “goodie bags” including blankets, ponchos, and toiletries for various SWAP events.

Beginning in September of 2023, SWAP staff members have offered freshly popped popcorn the last Friday of each month. Volunteers from various agencies such as OhioCAN, Smart Recovery, and Center for Hope and Healing also participated in handing out popcorn and engaging with clients.

The wound care clinic has been successfully implemented and executed with CCPH’s nurse practitioner treating 83 patients in 2023 for mild to severe injection related wounds. These wounds may have otherwise gone neglected or untreated, due to stigma and bias in other healthcare settings.

## Demographics

The tables below reflect the utilization data and basic demographics for SWAP from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. These values are incomplete in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Client ID codes were not always collected, and COVID-19 was used as an identifier during that time frame. Therefore, these values may not be a full representation of the clients at SWAP.

Age Data						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Average Age</b>	34.2	35.3	36.2	37.8	38.1	45.4
<b>Max Age</b>	77	68	65	70	74	80
<b>Min Age</b>	18	18	19	20	19	18

Age Range: 18-80

Median Age: 45

Gender Data								
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Grand Total	Precent
<b>Female</b>	120	123	83	85	105	74	590	36.8%
<b>Male</b>	181	199	152	173	172	130	1007	62.7%
<b>Trans</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.06%
<b>Unknown</b>	2	2	1	1	0	1	7	0.44%
<b>Grand total</b>	304	324	236	259	277	205	1605	100.0%

Race Data									
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total	Percent	
<b>White</b>	274	281	200	228	242	182	1407	87.66%	
<b>African American</b>	13	11	13	15	25	16	93	5.80%	
<b>Two or more races</b>	4	12	14	9	0	4	43	2.68%	
<b>Asian</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.06%	
<b>Hispanic</b>	1	--	1	--	--	1	3	0.19%	
<b>Native American</b>	1	3	0	1	5	1	11	0.69%	
<b>Other</b>	4	5	6	1	3	0	19	1.18%	
<b>Unidentified</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.06%	
<b>(Blank)</b>	7	12	1	5	1	1	27	1.68%	
<b>Total</b>	311	336	1	260	278	205	1605	100.00%	

<sup>1</sup>Sex rates were compiled from using the population in the age ranges of those at SWAP 18-80.

<sup>2</sup>Race rates were compiled using ages 18+ in Stark County, because those above the age range for SWAP could have sought services despite not being captured in our program.

<sup>3</sup>131 codes were not included in the 2023 Gender and Race data as they were both unduplicated and not registered as self-identified new clients.

SWAP participants presented from 111 different zip codes, 94.7% of those reported were from somewhere within Stark County. SWAP has no residency requirement and will serve anyone who comes to the program.

Number of Zip Codes Served						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Zip Codes</b>	52	71	71	69	105	111
<b>% of Clients from Stark County Zip Codes</b>	61.2%	62.0%	64.8%	67.6%	67.9%	94.7%

### OTHER SWAP PREVENTION ACTIVITIES FOR INJECTION DRUG USE

- HIV and Hepatitis C prevention education and rapid testing services.
- Linkages for making follow up medical appointments for new HIV-positive people to reduce the number of individuals falling out of care and adherence to HIV medications.
- Early Intervention Specialist Navigator (EIS) provides Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) referrals and can sign clients up for Prevention Assistance Program Intervention (PAPI). Clients who are eligible can receive low to no-cost HIV prevention services.
- Distribution of Narcan Kits through the Integrated Naloxone Access and Infrastructure Grant through the Ohio Department of Health from Project Dawn.
- Vaccination and education on Hepatitis A/B, seasonal flu, and COVID-19.
- The wound care clinic can prescribe antibiotics when appropriate.
- Condom and lube distribution through “brown bag” program.

Comprehensive Services & Referrals			
	2022	2023	Average per Visit (2023)
<b>Narcan Kits</b>	2,013	2,665	54.39
<b>HIV Linkage to Care (Began Counting 9/2023)</b>	--	5	9.8
<b>PrEP/PAPI Referrals (Began Counting 5/2022)</b>	43	117	2.39
<b>PAPI Enrollments (Began Counting 5/2022)</b>	18	20	0.41
<b>Kloxxado (Implemented 9/2023)</b>	--	462	9.43
<b>Referrals</b>	37	56	1.14

<b>HIV Testing</b>	16	6	0.12
<b>Hepatitis C Testing</b>	4	2	0.04
<b>Wound Care Education (Until 3/11/2022)</b>	2	--	--
<b>Wound Care Clinic (Implemented 3/18/2022)</b>	65	83	1.69
<b>Vaccinations</b>	11	8	0.16
<b>Brown Bags (Began Counting 5/2022)</b>	763	1180	24.08
<b>Total Services &amp; Referrals</b>	2,972	4,604	93.96

Due to an increase in overdoses throughout 2023, SWAP has noticed an increase in the number of Narcan® kits distributed and utilized. The program utilized the Integrated Naloxone Access and Infrastructure Grant through the Ohio Department of Health from Project Dawn to distribute Naloxone kits. Alongside Narcan® distribution, additional Kloxxado® medication was offered as part of the ProjectDAWN Narcan Kits. Kloxxado® contains 8 mg of naloxone in a single dose compared to the 4 mg of naloxone in a single dose of Narcan®.

## **IDENTIFIED AREAS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT**

1. Referrals/Linkages  
CCPH, with help from CommQuest Recovery Services, will continue to improve the referral and linkages aspects of the program. CCPH continues to develop relationships with other recovery organizations in the community to improve the quantity and quality of referrals, linkages to treatment, and services to SWAP participants.
2. Program area expansion/Utilizing space/New location necessary.  
Due to increased participation in SWAP, CCPH would benefit from a larger location to house the program.
3. Program Nurse  
To provide all services offered, CCPH is in the process of hiring an immunization nurse to provide vaccinations.
4. Ad Hoc Committee for SWAP  
Recruit some active users to offer insight into the populations needs.

## **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

To date, the cost to operate SWAP is estimated to be \$136,000 annually. It is anticipated that program costs will continue to increase as the need increases. Initially, funding was secured from United Way Foundation (to purchase NeedleShark grinder), startup funds from AIDS Healthcare Foundation, and a grant from the Comer Family Foundation to purchase syringes. With the addition of the Early Intervention Services grant, funds can be allocated to the purchase of harm reduction materials and access to Opiate Funds appropriated to the City of Canton, syringe costs



have been covered. However, this program would not be sustained without the collaborations with CommQuest, TASC (through StarkMHAR), and OhioCAN.

**Table: SWAP Budget**

<b>Annual SWAP Costs</b>	
<b>Line Item</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Personnel (Salary/Benefits)</b>	\$60,890.83
<b>Syringes (City of Canton Opiate Funds)</b>	\$31,467.65
<b>Bus Passes</b>	\$7,000
<b>Medical Supplies</b>	\$34,115
<b>Food Supplies</b>	\$1,382
<b>Travel/Training</b>	\$1,060
<b>Total Cost of SWAP</b>	<b>\$135,915.48</b>

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Access to sterile syringes is making a positive difference in Stark County and remains an important component of the overall strategy to reduce transmission of blood borne diseases.
2. Needle exchange services in Stark County play a significant role in the strategy to reduce the number of improperly discarded syringes.
3. Syringe service programs allow for one-on-one interactions with clients at risk while providing preventative measures for overdose related deaths.

## **2024 Goals**

- Continue anonymous, safe services to reduce the risk of HIV and Hepatitis C infection in our community by promoting continuous involvement of clients and encouraging them to tell others about SWAP.
- Continue to educate clients on the importance of safe injection practices.
- Continue Naloxone access and overdose prevention education and resources.
- Continue to inform clients at each visit of resources available in the community.
- Continue to offer free HIV and Hepatitis C testing and counseling at each visit.
- Continue offering free Hepatitis A & B, and seasonal flu vaccines to participants.
- Continue dialog with clients regarding improvement of SWAP services with a focus on recruiting individuals who inject drugs to participate on the SWAP Ad Hoc Committee.
- Continue to offer free wound care during SWAP hours.
- Establish sustainable and reliable funding for the program.