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Palm Beach County Approves Sterile Needle and Syringe Exchange Program

Palm Beach County is the first county in the State of Florida to authorize the operation of a Syringe Exchange Program following recent state legislation allowing local governments to establish the programs to prevent infectious disease among intravenous drug users. On September 1, the Board of County Commissioners approved an agreement with Rebel Recovery Florida, Inc., a nonprofit recovery support and HIV/AIDS services organization, to operate the Syringe Exchange Program as part of the Palm Beach County Community Services Department Infectious Disease Elimination program.

"Our needle exchange program is long overdue," said Commissioner Melissa McKinlay. "It is the result of lawmakers finally understanding these programs address a public health issue, not a moral failing. Ultimately, our goal is to end addiction. In the meantime, we must react responsibly in our community to reduce the spread of infectious diseases like HIV and hepatitis while offering access to resources in a compassionate environment. I would like to thank Rebel Recovery CEO Justin Kunzelman for seeing a good program in Miami and working with Hansel Tookes, M.D., M.P.H. to expand it statewide. I am proud to champion the effort that made Palm Beach County the first county in the state of Florida to expand the Infectious Disease Elimination program."

The program will offer free one-to-one exchange of clean, unused hypodermic syringes for used syringes and needles to help prevent the transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis, and other blood-borne diseases. The program will also provide a bridge to substance use disorder treatment, recovery support, as well as other primary health and social services for intravenous drug users.

Rebel Recovery Florida, Inc. plans to operate the Syringe Exchange Program from one or more mobile health units to provide services in targeted areas throughout Palm Beach County. The program projects to serve 200 participants and exchange 210,000 needles in support of ending the HIV epidemic in Palm Beach County by 2030.

For more information about the Syringe Exchange Program, please contact Rebel Recovery Florida, Inc. at (561) 508-8388.