



Mansfield/Ontario/Richland County Health Department

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Combined Board of Health • Stan Saalman, Commissioner

June 8, 2011

Reverend El Akuchie
Richland County Family Coalition
Godsfield House of Prayer
Mansfield OH 44906

Dear Reverend Akuchie:

Thank you for your letter expressing your concerns. It will be passed on to the Board of Health.

Upon receiving the request for needles, I like yourself had reservation about such a donation. However, I also had concerns about anyone contracting AIDS/HIV or Hepatitis—regardless of their personal habits (probably because I am a Health Commissioner whose duty it is to protect the public's health). I found myself unable to decide if the needles would do more harm or good in this type of situation.

I, therefore, gave the request to the Board of Health, expressed my concerns with each side and let them make the decision. The Board of Health consists of 14 members of our community.

There has never been any intention or thought of giving further donations of this kind. The needles in question were received as a result of the H1N1 flu vaccination program and the size is very rarely used in our daily practice. Therefore, would never have been used and were simply taking up needed space here at the Health Department. These needles came from the Federal Government and were now useless to us. Since we do not have any more sitting around to give out, we would not buy needles for another health district to use, and have no reason for a needle exchange program in our community (at least not that I am aware of), there is not much of a chance that the Health District would even contemplate a donation or needle exchange program in the near future.

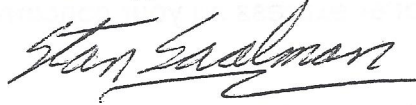
In the unlikelihood that this issue should arise again, during my term as Health Commissioner, I assure you that I will notify you, so that you can express your concerns to the Board of Health before they make any decisions. I do not expect this to happen however.

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Just as a side note, I will mention to you that it is my understanding that one of the primary concerns in Portsmouth is not protecting the health of drug users, but in fact non-drug users. The concern there is that people (including young children) have been or could be punctured by improperly discarded needles that have been used by illicit drug users. Needles have been found in children's' sandboxes and playgrounds, as well as various other locations in their city (see the enclosed article).

Thank you for your feedback and input which is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or if I can be of further assistance, please feel free to call me at 419/774-4500.

Sincerely,



Stan Saalman, MSEPH, JD, RS
Health Commissioner

SS/db
cc: Board of Health