

This letter is being submitted in response to the proposal presented by New Directions Northwest regarding the placement of a safe syringe disposal on Baker County Library District property.

I read each and every survey response as well as all social media comments that were provided to board members from various community discussion pages on Facebook. I appreciate the effort that Perry Stokes, Director, put into coordinating the survey and gathering the responses, which was no small feat.

Being familiar with the principles of harm reduction, I have researched the safe syringe disposal project in Malheur County. This program is intended to target those improperly disposed of needles as a result of drug use, but it's clear that safe syringe disposals will also benefit members of our community with legitimate medical conditions, such as those who are injecting insulin or going through fertility treatments. I had a discussion with a community member who informed me that she pays approximately \$50-\$75/month for the Baker County Health Department to dispose of her used sharps. These bins could potentially be a cost-savings for community members on a fixed income.

The majority of responses to the public survey were not in favor of a safe syringe disposal on library property, whether it be outside on the grounds or inside a lavatory. While many of the reasons provided in opposition appeared to be based on misinformation or a misunderstanding of the principles of harm reduction or this particular project, the main theme was centered on concerns of children being exposed to individuals suffering from drug addiction. After reviewing the social media comments (mostly in opposition), even those who were supportive of safe syringe disposals questioned whether the library was the most appropriate place for one and suggested other locations, such as the Baker County Health Department, New Directions Northwest or the Leo Adler Pathway. There is currently a safe syringe disposal located at Churchill School.

I am supportive of harm reduction efforts, including this safe syringe disposal offered by New Directions Northwest. It would potentially reduce some of the risk that is attributed to needles being improperly disposed of but would also benefit those with medical needs who struggle to afford the sharps disposal fee. After careful consideration of the public responses and concerns and factoring in the limited number of needles that have been found on library grounds, I recommend that BCLD not install a safe syringe disposal at this time.


Ashley McClay

BCLD Board Member, Position 4