



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Southwest Health System, in collaboration with the City of Cortez, Now Offers Family Sharps Disposal Program

Cortez, CO- More than 7.8 billion needles are used each year by the 13.5 million people in the US who self-inject medications outside of a healthcare setting. The number of drugs injected at home continues to grow, and the use of sharps in the home highlights the significant challenges of where and how to dispose of them and the dangers it poses to those who perform refuse collection in our community.

Southwest Health System has implemented a **free** “Family Sharps Disposal Program”. SHS is a designated residential sharps disposal location in which empty sharps containers **can be picked up from Southwest Health System Retail Pharmacy at 1311A North Mildred Road, (in the physician offices building) Monday through Friday 8:30am to 6:00pm and returned for disposal at the same location when full.** This program alleviates safety concerns with the City of Cortez and other residential trash disposal companies as there has not been a designated disposal site in our community previously meaning many of the “sharps” were being disposed of through regular, residential trash pickup.



After discussions with Cortez Mayor Karen Sheek, SHS CEO Tony Sudduth gave approval to SHS Chief Nursing Officer Karen Labonte, Pharmacy Director and Infection Control Officer Marc Meyer, and EVS Director LeeAnn Owens to develop a plan to set up the program, procure the containers and prepare a disposal budget.

Cortez Mayor Karen Sheek said, *“The city is pleased to be partnering with the hospital on this program. Our thanks to hospital management and staff for their willingness to address this issue and their prompt response in coming up with a solution. Now that there is a safe way for households to dispose of needles, I encourage every family to take advantage of this program. This will eliminate potential injury to city and county refuse handlers and will help keep hazardous biowaste out of our land fill.”*

SHS Pharmacy Director Marc Meyer agreed, *“Where can needles be disposed of is probably the number one question infection control gets on a weekly basis here at the hospital. I’m so excited we have been able to put together the **Family Sharps Disposal Program**, from an infection prevention standpoint. This could be key in keeping family sharps waste out of our landfill and properly placed in a medical waste facility. It certainly makes it easy, safe and cost-effective for individuals to dispose of syringes.”* SHS is pleased that the state has authorized us to provide this service to the community.

We are excited to offer this service to improve sharps safety in our community and assist the community with a safe, affordable, and convenient way to dispose of syringes. Any questions regarding the program, please call 970-564-2280.

About Southwest Health System

Southwest Health System operates Southwest Memorial Hospital, a critical access hospital, Southwest Medical Group comprised of 6 clinics providing primary and specialty care services, and Southwest Health System Pharmacy. SHS provides over 50 service lines to the community. SHS is a private, not-for-profit corporation operating under all guidelines



and regulations for non-profits and is also governed by a volunteer board. For more information, visit www.swhealth.org.

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