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HEALTH
DEPARTMENT
of Northwest Michigan

www.nwhealth.org

Be smart about your tattoos—use a licensed body art facility, says Health Department

CHARLEVOIX – Think before you ink, reminds the Health Department of Northwest Michigan.

The Health Department encourages potential tattoo and piercing clients to do their research on body art facilities. Only licensed facilities—those inspected and approved by Health Department sanitarians—may legally perform tattooing, branding, or body piercings.

It is extremely important that individuals use reputable, licensed artists for their body art, said Scott Kendzierski, Director of Environmental Health at the Health Department. “Unlicensed operations put people at serious risk of contracting unwanted and potentially life-altering bloodborne diseases or infections. Many unlicensed ‘artists’ have not apprenticed under a technician or been properly trained, which can result in a range of issues from poor artistry to infection and disfigurement.”

The inspection process ensures that tattooists and piercers are in compliance with state regulation. For example, inspectors will review the facility’s records for training documentation, equipment sterilization records, and signed parental consent forms. Inspections also evaluate cleaning and sterilization practices, cross-contamination prevention procedures, sharps procedures, expiration dates of inks and sterilized equipment, and the use of approved products and materials. Such requirements aim to decrease the risk of transmission of bloodborne diseases such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Michigan law states that individuals shall not tattoo, brand, or perform body piercing unless they operate out of a licensed facility. Not only do unlicensed body artists break the law, but they may risk the health of their clients by not following appropriate infection control protocols. “There are many unlicensed people tattooing and piercing that do not have the proper training, equipment, or environment to conduct procedures safely,” said Kendzierski. “Body modification—whether a tattoo or piercing—is a medical procedure and should be done under controlled conditions with the highest level of client education and assurance.”

Visit www.nwhealth.org for an up-to-date listing of licensed facilities throughout Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties:

- Bellaire Tattoo, Bellaire
- Infinite Ink, Boyne City
- WAM Ink, Charlevoix
- Lakeview Tattoo, Petoskey
- Sun Kissed, Petoskey
- Tip of the Mitt Tattoo, Petoskey
- Spy Tattoos LLC, Gaylord
- Paragon Ink, Gaylord

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties.