Overview of Syringe Exchange Programs

New York City Police Academy
November 24, 2004
History of Syringe Exchange

- Title 10 N.Y.C.R.R. 80.131 (a) (2), 80.135.
- Gives the NYS Commissioner of Health the authority to grant waivers to health facilities, community based organizations and hospitals to collect and distribute syringes.
Syringe Exchange (SEP) in New York State

- 13 Programs
- 9 in New York City
- 1 in Buffalo (Erie County)
- 1 in Rochester (Monroe County)
- 1 in Mount Vernon (Westchester County)
- 1 in Ithaca (Tomkins County)
Integrated Services

- Outreach Services
- Client Intake/Triage
- Syringe Exchange
- Drop-in Center
- Medical Care/Dental
- Prevention Case Management
- Prevention with Positives
- Group and Individual Level Interventions
- Mental Health Services
NYSDOH/AIDS Institute has oversight responsibilities for syringe exchange programs.

Comprehensive application process.

Stringent data collection requirements.

AIDS Institute provides technical assistance, site visits, annual audit and program evaluation.
NYPD Operations Order

- Possession of sterile and used syringes is legal.
- There is no limit on the number of syringes one can carry.
- There is no limit of the geographical location in New York State or City; injectors can possess syringes in areas where there is no exchange program.
An arrest should not be effected if the only charge is criminal possession of a hypodermic instrument.

An arrest should not be effected for residue in a used syringe.

Syringes should never be confiscated and if arrested syringes can be documented as personal property and returned after release.
NYPD Operations Order

- Programs are anonymous and confidential.
- Participants are issued ID cards which contain codes.
- Program ID codes are different and all utilize variations of numbers and letters.
- All program ID cards have a 24 hour verification phone number listed on the back of the card.
Individuals over 18 can buy up to 10 syringes in a pharmacy; not everyone has a program ID card to possess syringes.

Without an ID card they should not be arrested and should not have syringes confiscated.

Officers should not confiscate program cards or syringes at any time.
Adolescent Drug Injectors

- Adolescent drug injectors have poor access to sterile syringes because they do not have identification or proof of age to buy syringes in a pharmacy.
- Without ID syringes may be confiscated leading to sharing or buying used syringes.
Adolescents are very vulnerable on the street and often have to ‘act tough’ to get by.

Adults want to take away adolescents syringes or ‘force’ them to stop using; this often leads to more harmful behaviors of sharing syringes.
Outcomes and Success

HIV Seroprevalence among IDU’s in NY

Don C Des Jarlais Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, NY

1990-92: 50
1993-95: 45
1996-98: 30
1998-2002: 15

IDUHA Injection Drug Users Health Alliance
Outcomes and Success

- There has been an 80% reduction in HIV transmission.
- NYC 19902: 50% of IDUs were HIV positive, 4% infected per year
- NYC 2002: as few as 18% of IDUs are HIV positive, 1% infected per year
Outcomes and Success

Received HIV Testing at NYC Needle Exchanges

Don C Des Jarlais Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, NY

[Bar chart showing trends from 1990-92 to 1998-2002]
Syringe exchange reduces HIV and hepatitis C transmission without increasing drug use.

Programs provide immediate access to drug treatment, medical care and mental health services.
Public and Personal Safety

Research About Syringe Exchange Shows
Don C Des Jarlais Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, NY

- No negative impact on crime.
- Fewer discarded syringes: 82% return rate
- Reduction in needlestick injuries to law enforcement.
Public and Personal Safety

Research About Syringe Exchange Shows
Don C Des Jarlais Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, NY

- No effect on increase of drug use in the community.
- No increase in the number of new injectors. Participants average 15 - 20 year injection history.
- Less than 1% of participants are under 20 yrs old.
Resource for the Police

- Have provided disposal of syringes found in the community; programs respond to any calls to clean up/dispose infected syringes

- Program staff will come to precincts to provide roll call presentations, sharps containers, needlestick, and syringe disposal information
Syringe exchange programs teach IDUs how to inform officers they are in possession of syringes prior to being searched.

Programs request that participants respect officers and document badge number and precinct if syringes are confiscated.

Police can refer drug users to our services for medical care and drug treatment.