

Needle and Syringe Programs and Occupational Health & Safety in Prison Settings

Supply reduction: implementation in prison

- Widespread
- Expensive
- Limited evaluation

Demand reduction: implementation in prison

- Reasonable
- Inexpensive
- Favourable evaluation

Harm reduction: implementation in prison

- Limited / least likely
- Inexpensive
- Favourable evaluation

2004 National Prison Entrants' Blood Borne Virus Survey

HIV

- . 3 male inmates tests positive for HIV infection

Hepatitis C

- . 34% prevalence among all inmates participating in the survey.
- . 56% prevalence among respondents reporting injecting drug use
- . 41% prevalence among respondents reporting previous incarceration
- . 16% prevalence among respondents entering prison for the first time

United Nations

Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners

5. Except for those limitations that are demonstrably necessitated by the fact of incarceration, all prisoners shall retain the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, where the State concerned is a party, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, as well as such other rights as are set out in other United Nations covenants.

9. Prisoners shall have access to the health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation.

Revised Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia 2004

These guidelines have been developed in accordance with the principle that prisoners are:

- treated with respect as human beings and not to be subject to harsh or degrading treatment, physical or psychological abuse.
- owed a duty of care by the Administering Department.

Safe Environments and the Effective Management of Risk

1.25 Prisons should identify, minimise and manage risk.

1.27 Prison should provide for the personal safety of staff and prisoners by ensuring a prison environment that protects the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of individuals.

1.28 Prisons should develop and implement a prisoner safety regime which:

...

- identifies prisoners who present a risk to prison staff or other prisoners; and
- places prisoners in situations which minimise their opportunities to be harmed or harm others.

1.31 All necessary measures should be taken to ensure that no prisoner injuries or unnatural deaths occur.

1.34 Prisons should provide a management system that meets the different and particular needs of all prisoners including "at-risk" prisoners."

Circumstances in which NSI occurred

	N (%)
Searching an inmate	1 (7)
Searching a cell	5 (29)
Searching another area	5 (29)
All searching	11 (65)
Routine duties other than searching	6 (35)

Larney, S. *Injecting drug use in prisons: Occupational needlestick injuries and evidence of multiple users and blood borne viral infections in prison syringes*. Paper presented at the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs Conference, Cairns, 2006.

“An employer shall take all reasonable practicable steps to protect the health, safety and welfare at work of the employer’s employees.”

There have been no cases of syringes being used as a weapon in a prison setting in countries outside Australia which have introduced prison regulated and controlled NSPs.





"The blanket prohibition has made syringes a scarce, high-value commodity in prison ... Needles are routinely shared, sometimes between as many as 100 inmates. When blunt, it is not unheard of for them to be sharpened on prison walls" – Paul Smith (2007)
Australian Doctor: Prison Health Special Report

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Prison needle program may reduce virus spread

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Broadcast: 02/10/2009

Reporter: Steve Cannane



The Australian drugs conference in Melbourne has today called for a trial of needle and syringe programs in Australian prisons. One in three Australian inmates has hepatitis C, and it is thought that a needle and syringe program could reduce the incidence of blood-borne viruses in jail.