What are Syringe Exchange Programs (SEPs)?
SEPs offer a range of social services to people who struggle with addiction, including access to drug treatment, housing, employment opportunities, and sterile syringes. These programs protect users and the public from the spread of disease such as HIV and hepatitis C and also collect used syringes from the community to dispose of them safely. SEPs do NOT increase or encourage drug use. In fact, people who participate in SEPs are five times more likely to enter an addiction treatment program than non-participants.

How do SEPs Benefit Law Enforcement?
SEPs are shown to lower needle-stick injuries to LEOs by 66%, decrease hepatitis C and HIV transmission rates by 50-80%, and lower crime rates by 11% by connecting people caught up in the criminal justice system to social services programs. They are also extremely effective at connecting hard-to-reach populations to drug treatment.

“Statistic show that syringe exchange programs greatly reduce the number of persons contracting HIV and Hepatitis and increase the safety of the officers on the street by reducing the number of them who are exposed to ‘dirty’ needles. I would also hope that the exchange programs would lead to more people to seek treatment and result in fewer persons overdosing. This epidemic of IV drug abuse has reached such dangerous levels that we should consider all options in an attempt to help the communities we serve.”

- Donnie Varnell, Special Agent in Charge, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation

FAST FACTS ON SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS
- SEPs prevent the spread of HIV, HCV and HBV, reducing the taxpayer burden for these diseases. A sterile syringe could prevent these diseases for 7 cents
- SEPs collect discarded needles and dispose of them safely, thereby reducing the number of syringes in public areas
- SEPs reduce needle-stick injury to law enforcement by 66%
- SEPs decrease hepatitis C transmission among people who inject drugs by as much as 50%. HIV injection rates have decreased by as much as 80% in areas with SEPs
- Crime decreases in areas with a SEP because participants are connected to housing, food pantries and other social services
- There is available funding from private foundations to cover the costs of a SEP. NC taxpayers won’t have to foot the bill.
- SEPs are a gateway to drug treatment. SEP participants are 5 times more likely to enter treatment than non-participants
- NC taxpayers paid $50 million for Hep C treatment and $117 million for HIV treatment in 2014 alone
Crime decreases in SEP areas because participants are connected to drug treatment, housing, food pantries and other social services. In Baltimore neighborhoods with syringe exchange have experienced an 11% decrease in crime compared to those without syringe exchange, who saw an 8% increase in criminal activity.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

CONCERNS

- Not Enough Drug Users Enter Treatment
  SEPs are a gateway to drug treatment. SEP participants are 5 times more likely to enter treatment than non-participants.¹

- Increases in Drug-Related Crime
  Crime decreases in SEP areas because participants are connected to drug treatment, housing, food pantries and other social services. In Baltimore neighborhoods with syringe exchange have experienced an 11% decrease in crime compared to those without syringe exchange, who saw an 8% increase in criminal activity.¹

- Increases in Drug Use
  SEPs DO NOT cause any increase in drug use. In fact, they decrease drug use by connecting people to treatment.²

- Needle-stick Injury
  SEPs lower needle-stick injury to law enforcement by 66%.³

- Increases in HIV, HCV and HBV among populations in frequent contact with law enforcement
  SEPs decrease hepatitis C transmission among people who inject drugs by as much as 50%. HIV injection rates have decreased by as much as 80% in areas with SEPs.⁴

- Discarded Needles in the Street
  Taxpayers collect discarded needles and dispose of them safely, thereby reducing the number of syringes in public areas.⁵

- Taxpayers should not have to pay for syringes for injection drug users
  SEPs prevent the spread of HIV, HCV and HBV, reducing the taxpayer burden for these diseases. The lifetime cost of treating HIV is $385,000-619,000, while HCV costs $100,000-300,000.⁶ A sterile syringe could prevent these diseases for 7 cents.

RESEARCH

There is available funding from private foundations to cover the costs of a SEP. NC taxpayers won’t have to foot the bill.

“Law enforcement has been at the front lines of the drug problem and has witnessed the devastating effects of drug use and abuse. We are seeing more people use heroin, more people inject prescription drugs, and more people get sick from diseases like HIV and hepatitis C. Although the enforcement of drug laws is and always will be an integral part of police work, we also realize that we will not solely arrest our way out of this problem. I support syringe exchange programs because they are shown to lower the rates of disease and help connect drug users to the treatment that they need to combat this epidemic.”

- Chief Bill Hollingsed, Waynesville Police Department

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