

Position Statement on Syringe Exchange Programs

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July 2012
Approved by the Assembly, May 2012

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Issue

According to the office of the United States Surgeon General, syringe exchange programs are an effective public health intervention strategy that reduces the transmission of HIV and hepatitis. Syringe exchange programs do not encourage the use of illegal drugs, but seek to prevent the harm caused by unsafe drug use.

Position Statement

1. Syringe exchange programs should provide on-site counseling and education about alcohol and other

substance use, as well as referrals and improved access to comprehensive drug treatment programs, medical and reproductive care, counseling and testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and blood-borne pathogens, psychiatric and psychosocial services, and alternative methods for further reducing the harm associated with drug use.

2. Psychiatrists can help foster the success of syringe exchange programs by supporting efforts to remove government restrictions on the availability of sterile syringes specifically within the structure of organized needle exchange programs, encouraging government sponsored efforts to broaden the availability of these programs in targeted areas and provide public health education to promote safer hygiene practices among IDUs, and endorsing the core strategy of increasing the availability of quality detoxification and treatment programs for all substance users.

Prepared by the Steering Committee on HIV Psychiatry.

See also the related resource document.