



Needle and Syringe Program provision from WA Country Health Service facilities Policy

1. Background

In Australia, the principal public health strategy to prevent the transmission of blood-borne viruses (including HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C), among and from people who inject drugs is to provide access to sterile needles and syringes.

The Western Australian needle and syringe program is a harm reduction program that provides sterile needles and syringes to people who inject drugs to reduce transmission of blood-borne viruses.

In Western Australia, the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2014* and *Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016* provides a legislative framework for needle and syringe provision to take place through needle and syringe programs approved by the WA Department of Health, Chief Executive Officer.

Pharmacies remain an important source of sterile needles and syringes for people who inject drugs in Western Australia. However, in order to reduce blood-borne virus transmission and other injecting-related harms in regional and remote areas, access to sterile needles and syringes is provided by WACHS facilities. **As a minimum**, access to sterile needles and syringes is provided by WACHS hospitals that deliver emergency after-hours services.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 Access to needles and syringes

WACHS hospitals that deliver emergency after-hours services are to provide after-hours access to needles and syringes. After-hours access is defined as the hours during which the local or nearest community pharmacy is closed.

WACHS health facilities are to provide 24-hour access to sterile needles if the local pharmacy does not retail needles and syringes or if there is no local pharmacy. If the WACHS facility is not open 24 hours, then access to sterile needles and syringes must be provided for all hours that it is open.

2.2 Alignment with WA Department of Health guidelines

WACHS needle and syringe program delivery must align with WA Department of Health guidelines:

- [Guideline: Provision of needle and syringe programs \(NSP\) in Western Australia.](#)
- [Guidelines for the Operation and Maintenance of Needle and Syringe Vending Machines \(NSVMs\) and Needle and Syringe Dispensing Machines \(NSDMs\).](#)

2.3 Orientation and training requirements

WACHS managers will ensure that staff involved the needle and syringe program have completed the relevant online orientation and training package:

- **WACHS Needle and Syringe Program LMS training course:** An introduction to the Needle and Syringe Program for WACHS staff. This training course is for Emergency Department clerical staff, nurses and orderlies; Community Health, Mental Health and Remote Area Clinic staff
- **Needle and Syringe Program Orientation and Training:** This ten-module comprehensive training resource for Needle and Syringe Program Coordinators is provided by the Mental Health Commission.

2.4 Program approvals

Needle and syringe program approvals will be renewed every three years for each site. This process is initiated by the WA Department of Health, Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program. Email - NSP@health.wa.gov.au

Regional Coordinators will advise the Chief Executive Officer of the WA Department of Health (or delegate) of any changes to program operation, including and change in:

- coordination
- persons operating the program
- operating hours
- service being delivered.

Advisement is by email - NSP@health.wa.gov.au

2.5 Compliance and Reporting

WACHS sites will abide by conditions in the *Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016* (Part 10, r. 108-113) in the operation and coordination of the needle and syringe program.

Each site will report annually, after June 30, using the annual reporting template provided by WA Department of Health, Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program. Send reports to (NSP@health.wa.gov.au)

3. Definitions

Emergency after-hours services	Emergency access via the emergency department at a public hospital facility.
Needle and syringe dispensing machine (NSDM)	Self-service devices which dispense sterile injecting equipment for free.
Needle and syringe exchange program (NSEP)	Supply of free sterile needles and syringes on the return of used needles and syringes.
Needle and syringe vending machine (NSVM)	Self-service devices which vend sterile injecting equipment on a cost-recovery basis.

After-hours availability	Hours during which the local or nearest pharmacy is closed.
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4. Roles and Responsibilities

Site needle and syringe program coordinators must:

- Work with the WA Department of Health Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program on implementation and reporting for the program
- Complete required training programs
- Ensure compliance with the relevant needle and syringe program guidelines
- Ensure that staff who participate in the delivery of the program understand the requirements of the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2014* and *Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016* and are appropriately instructed and trained

All staff working on site or with clients of the needle and syringe program (includes: Emergency Department clerical staff, nurses and orderlies; Community Health, Mental Health and Remote Area Clinic staff)

- Must complete the WACHS Needle and Syringe Program LMS training course

All Staff are required to work within policies and guidelines to make sure that WACHS is a safe, equitable and positive place to be.

5. Compliance

The WA Health Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program monitors WACHS compliance with this Policy via the administration and maintenance of needle and syringe program approvals and renewals, and annual reporting.

This policy is aligned with the [Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#).

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

6. Records Management

All WACHS corporate records must be stored in the approved Electronic Documents and Records Management System.

[Records Management Policy](#)

7. Evaluation

Staff completion of the WA Health online training package is monitored by the Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program.

WACHS needle and syringe program coordinators will monitor completion of the WACHS Needle and Syringe Program training course by relevant staff.

Site applications and reporting for the needle and syringe program is monitored by the WA Health Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program.

8. Standards

National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards – 1.15

9. Legislation

Medicines and Poisons Act 2014 (WA)

Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016 (WA)

10. References

1. Government of Western Australia Department of Health – Communicable disease control guidelines [Internet] Perth WA [updated 2021 November 1; accessed 2021 November 17] Available from:
https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Communicable-disease-control-guidelines
2. Government of Western Australia, Department of Health Public and Aboriginal Health Division: Communicable Disease Control Directorate Guidelines – Provision of needle and syringe programs (NSP) in Western Australia. September 2021. Available from: <https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/~media/Corp/Documents/Health-for/Communicable-Diseases/Guidelines/Provision-of-needle-and-syringe-programs.pdf> [Accessed 17 November 2021]
3. Government of Western Australia, Department of Health Public and Aboriginal Health Division: Communicable Disease Control Directorate Guidelines – Guidelines for the Operation and Maintenance of Needle and Syringe Vending Machines (NSVM) and Needle and Syringe Dispensing Machines (NSDM). September 2021. Available from:
<https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/~media/Corp/Documents/Health-for/Communicable-Diseases/Guidelines/Operation-and-Maintenance-of-NSVM-and-NSDM.pdf>

11. Related Forms

Nil

12. Related Policy Documents

Nil

13. Related WA Health System Policies

[Guideline: Provision of needle and syringe programs \(NSP\) in Western Australia](#)
[Guidelines for the Operation and Maintenance of Needle and Syringe Vending Machines \(NSVMs\) and Needle and Syringe Dispensing Machines \(NSDMs\)](#)

14. Policy Framework

[Public Health](#)

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