



Needle and Syringe Program Site Guideline

1. Purpose

This document outlines guidance regarding Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) delivery at WA Country Health Service (WACHS) to assist NSP Site Coordinators and staff involved in the operation of the NSP.

This needle and syringe program (NSP) aims to minimise the transmission of blood-borne viruses (BBVs) by providing sterile injecting equipment to people who inject drugs (PWID).

As far as practical and possible, this NSP will also provide safer injecting, disposal and health information for clients, as well as appropriate referral to drug treatment, BBV testing and treatment services, or other social and community services, if requested by clients.

This document is to be read in conjunction with the following (as relevant to the NSP model being delivered):

- WACHS [Needle and Syringe Program Policy](#)
- Department of Health (DoH) [Guideline: Provision of needle and syringe programs \(NSP\) in Western Australia](#)
- DoH [Guidelines for The Operation and Maintenance of Needle and Syringe Vending Machines \(NSVMs\) and Needle and Syringe Dispensing Machines \(NSDMs\)](#)
- [Medicines and Poisons Act 2014](#) (WA)
- [Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#) (WA).

2. Guideline

The primary public health strategy in Australia to prevent the transmission of blood-borne viruses (BBVs), such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, amongst people who inject drugs (PWID), is to provide access to sterile needles and syringes. Needle and syringe programs (NSP) aim to reduce the transmission of BBVs via distribution of sterile needles and syringes, whilst also providing safer injecting, disposal and health information for clients, and appropriate referral to drug treatment, BBV testing and treatment services, as well as to a range of other social and community services.

Increasing access to needles and syringes as a strategy to reduce the transmission of blood-borne viruses is supported by the following state and national strategies:

- [WA Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Strategy 2024-2030](#)
- [WA Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Action Plan 2024-2030](#)
- [Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2030](#)
- [Fifth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Blood-borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2018–2022](#)
- [Sixth National Hepatitis C Strategy 2025-2030](#)
- [Fourth National Hepatitis B Strategy 2023-2030](#)
- [Ninth National HIV Strategy 2012-2024-2030](#)
- [National Drug Strategy 2017-2026.](#)

In Western Australia, there are four main models of NSP:

- Needle and syringe exchange programs (NSEPs) supply sterile needles and syringes with disposal containers and allow for the return of used needles and syringes. These are run through a combination of fixed-sites, outreach and mobile services.
- Community Pharmacy-based NSPs are run on a commercial basis selling needles and syringes to PWID.
- Health service-based NSPs provide sterile injecting equipment at no cost to PWID through regional hospitals, public health units, community health centres, community drug services and other health services.
- Needle and syringe vending machines (NSVM) and needle and syringe dispensing machines (NSDM) are self-service devices which dispense sterile injecting equipment on either a cost-recovery basis (NSVM) or for free (NSDM).

Note: This guideline covers operation of WACHS NSPs and NSDMs. WACHS NSEPs have additional requirements to those covered in this guideline.

Further information for NSP providers is available on the [WA Health website](#).

2.1 Person or class of persons operating the program

Needles and syringes will be distributed and information disseminated by trained WACHS staff including:

- Emergency Department clerical staff
- nurses
- healthcare workers and patient service assistants
- Community Health staff
- Mental Health staff
- Health Promotion staff
- Remote Area Clinic staff.

These staff will be referred to in this document as NSP staff. Refer to [Section 2.6](#) for training requirements.

Every WACHS NSP site must have a designated Site Coordinator to support the operational delivery of the NSP. They are responsible for day-to-day service provision in line with WACHS policy and guideline(s). Refer to [Section 3](#) for detailed roles and responsibilities.

2.2 Permits and hours of operation

All NSP sites require approval under the [Medicines and Poisons Act 2014](#) (WA) and the [Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#) (WA), which is renewed every 3 years. The site license renewal process is coordinated by the WACHS Regional NSP Coordinators on behalf of SHBBVP. WACHS NSP sites are listed in Appendix B.

It is a requirement that hours of operation be included in of the site are in the site's licence. The Regional NSP Coordinator and the SHBBVP are to be notified of changes to hours of operation via email to:

- Your WACHS Regional NSP Coordinator via WACHS.PublicHealthPrograms@health.wa.gov.au
- SHBBVP via NSP@health.wa.gov.au.

2.3 Ordering and distribution of needles and syringes

All WACHS NSPs (with the exception of NSEPs) are to distribute needles and syringes as a packaged product (FITSTICK®), as supplied by the Department of Health's SHBBVP.

A summary of product contents is provided below:

Fitstick®	• 5 x needles and syringes (BD 29G 1ml) • 5 x disposal receptacles
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As part of all the packaged products dispensed across WACHS NSPs, a disposal receptacle accompanies the distribution of every needle and syringe.

NSP Site Coordinators and staff should plan to order additional stock prior to current supplies running out, ensure that sufficient stock is available to provide a reliable and uninterrupted service.

To order Fitstick® packs, email the following information to NSP@health.wa.gov.au:

Organisation	
Attn	Site contact person's name
Quantity*	xx boxes of 100 (Fitstick® 5 pack DS -146)
Delivery Address	
Courier Company	
Courier Account Number	
Comments	

***Note:** The minimum order is one box. Each box contains 100 Fitstick® packs. There are five needles and syringes, and five individual disposal receptacles in each Fitstick® pack.

Where possible, to support the principles of harm minimisation all WACHS NSP services will supply alcohol swabs and sterile water for distribution to clients. Information on safe injecting practices and safe disposal of injecting equipment should be provided whenever needles and syringes are provided. When appropriate, NSP staff should engage in harm reduction brief intervention with NSP clients.

2.4 Cost of needles and syringes to the client

Sterile needles and syringes Fitstick® 5 are supplied by the SHBBVP and provided at no cost to consumers.

The quantity of needles and syringes provided per client may vary by site. Best practice supports an unlimited supply to reduce harm. Wherever feasible, supply should reflect the individual client's request. If any concerns arise regarding supply, please contact your Regional NSP Coordinator.

2.5 Return of loose needles and syringes

The provision of needles and syringes by WACHS NSPs is not contingent on the return of used needles and syringes.

NSP staff are expected to encourage clients to safely dispose of their used needles and syringes appropriately, and information to this effect should be made available to clients attending the NSP.

Occasionally, some clients may return used equipment to an NSP for safe disposal. The NSP cannot accept returned/used needle and syringe. In the instance where a client tries to return or dispose needles and syringes at the NSP, staff can:

- direct clients to an appropriate means of disposal such as a community sharps bin, or a sealed rigid-walled, puncture resistant, plastic container with a well-secured lid
- advise clients that a puncture resistant disposal receptacle can be placed in a domestic rubbish bin.



ATTENTION

Under no circumstances are NSP staff to directly handle used injecting equipment returned by clients.

2.6 Staff education and training

NSP Site Coordinators are required under the [Medicine and Poisons Regulations 2016](#) (WA) to ensure that all persons participating in the program (i.e. those providing the service) are appropriately instructed, trained and understand the program's requirements.

It is expected that all staff will be conversant in this guideline for their program and be familiar with relevant NSP resources and guiding documents, as supplied by WACHS and the SHBBVP.

All WACHS NSP staff are required to:

- read and be familiar with this guideline and other relevant policies of the NSP program
- complete [WACHS Needle and Syringe Program eLearning](#) (WNSP EL2)
- complete the [NSP Online Orientation and Training Package](#) (<https://aodelearning.mhc.wa.gov.au/>)
- be kept informed of issues related to injecting drug use by the NSP Site Coordinator.

Staff are encouraged to complete the [MyLearning - Understanding and Reducing Blood-borne Virus Stigma and Discrimination](#) (health.wa.gov.au). If specific staff training needs are identified, the WACHS NSP Site Coordinator will seek the support of the WACHS Regional NSP Coordinator and the SHBBVP to assist with providing training to meet identified needs.

The SHBBVP also facilitates annual NSP Coordinator training, which will be advertised and promoted to WACHS NSP staff.

2.7 Workplace safety

Staff are to familiarise themselves with [Work Health and Safety policy](#) and related documents. In the instance of inappropriately disposed sharps and equipment being found on site by staff, relevant workplace policies and procedures are to be followed to dispose of the used equipment.

- Staff are required to follow relevant procedures for disposing of needles and syringes found within the health service grounds, including the [Waste Management Policy](#) and [Safety Risk Reporting](#).
- Staff are to adhere to WACHS policies for the management of needle stick injuries and other occupational exposure injuries.
- Prior to commencement with the NSP, all staff are advised to be immunised against hepatitis B and ensure their tetanus immunisation is up-to-date.

People accessing WACHS services may occasionally behave inappropriately for a range of reasons. Any incidents impacting staff safety should be responded to and recorded in accordance with WACHS [Risk Management Policies](#) and [Procedure](#).

If any concerns arise, please contact your Regional Coordinator.

2.8 Client confidentiality and privacy

All WACHS staff, regardless of role, must always maintain client confidentiality as per the WA Health Mandatory Policy (MP) 0124/19 [Code of Conduct Policy](#).

All WACHS NSP staff, regardless of their status or job role, are to always respect and protect the confidentiality of their clients and whenever possible, prevent this being compromised by others for whatever intent or purpose. Where possible, client confidentiality is to be supported by distributing injecting equipment in an unmarked paper bag.

De-identified client information collected on the number of Fitpacks dispensed is never to be shared with external agencies.

Staff will always respect client confidentiality and in all circumstances. Confidentiality must be maintained even when a client is known to be participating in other programs (e.g. the [Community Pharmacotherapy Program](#)) or when the client or client's relatives are known to the provider.

2.9 Staff attitude

All clients and patients presenting to WACHS services should be treated with the same care, regardless of their background and or presentation. NSPs are often the only point of contact that people who inject drugs (PWID) have with a health service provider, which is why client-centred care through a trauma-informed approach is essential. The attitudes and behaviours demonstrated by NSP staff towards clients influences the clients' receptivity to offers of information and future access to health services.

WACHS NSP staff are to adopt an empathetic, respectful, non-judgemental approach when interacting with clients. Further understanding on providing stigma-free person centred care can be accessed via [WA Health My Learning Stigma and Discrimination Training](#).

2.10 Engaging with NSP clients using Harm Reduction Brief Intervention

Providing harm reduction information to NSP clients may assist to reduce and prevent harms associated with injecting drug use for both the individual and the wider community. WACHS NSP staff are strongly encouraged to interact and build rapport with clients to create opportunities for the provision of harm reduction information and/or referral.

At a minimum, this may be asking the NSP client if there is anything else that they need help with today, or a question/key message such as listed below:

- Do you know how to use the black sleeves within the pack as they are there to secure your used needle after use?
- Do you know it is important to swab before injecting? Use one alcohol swab to wipe the injecting site downwards once only, and a second swab for cleaning any equipment to prevent infection. If you don't have swabs, washing your site with warm soapy water is good too.
- Are you aware that you should only use your needle once? This will reduce the risk of vein damage.
- There is hepatitis C treatment available which has minimal to no side effects. Have you thought about having a hepatitis C test or had one lately?
- Clean fit for every hit.
- Rotate your injection sites on a regular basis, this will give your veins a rest in between hits.
- Just letting our clients know, it's good to get tested for blood-borne viruses at least once a year.

The practice of enclosing relevant print resources with any equipment distributed is encouraged. Resources may provide information on topics such as:

- safe injecting practices
- blood-borne viruses (hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV)
- blood-borne virus testing and treatment
- appropriate disposal of injecting equipment or drug treatment and support options.

NSP staff seeking suitable print resources to provide to NSP clients are encouraged to contact the WACHS NSP Regional Coordinator.

2.11 Client referral

Referrals should only be made with client consent, particularly where drug treatment agencies are concerned. When making a referral, NSP staff should involve the client and a range of options be offered. The final choice should be left to the client.

Referral of clients to other health and community services will only be done with the consent of the client to agencies which are appropriate for their needs.

NSP staff are expected to be familiar with health and community agencies to which they can refer clients, according to a client's needs at that point in time. A local referral list is available from the Regional NSP Coordinator.

2.12 Universal access

Legislatively, there is no minimum age for people accessing the needle and syringe program. The [Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#) (WA) refers to NSP clients only as

“person”. That is, there is no limitation to access NSP, in regard to a client’s age, gender, race or cultural background.

Research indicates the median age of initiation into injecting drug use is 18 to 19 years of age. Staff are encouraged to interact with clients who appear to be juveniles to assess their level of knowledge in regard to injecting drug use and associated harms, and to provide information and referral as appropriate.

Young people who inject drugs may be apprehensive about approaching NSPs, so care should be taken not to alienate them from accessing services, but rather to create an environment where they can ask for advice or referral regarding their drug use and other health and welfare issues they may be experiencing.

- WACHS NSP staff will provide sterile needles and syringes to all clients that approach the NSP, regardless of age, gender, race, or cultural background.
- WACHS NSP staff will provide relevant information and referral to clients, on request only, to suit differing client needs.

2.13 Access by clients undergoing treatment related to drug use

It is not the role or responsibility of WACHS NSP staff to regulate clients’ behaviour in terms of their drug use. Clients known to be accessing treatment related to their drug use (such as the Community Pharmacotherapy Program), should still be provided with the same access to NSP as any other clients. NSP staff are to provide information to clients about polydrug use and overdose prevention where appropriate.

2.14 Helpful contacts

WACHS Regional Needle and Syringe Program Coordinator

Each WACHS region has a Regional WACHS NSP Coordinator. Contact details are listed in Appendix C and available by emailing

WACHS.PublicHealthPrograms@health.wa.gov.au

WACHS NSP Program Lead

WACHS.PublicHealthPrograms@health.wa.gov.au

Needle and Syringe Program, Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program

Communicable Disease Control Directorate

189 Royal Street, East Perth WA 6009

Contact number: (08) 9222 2189

Email: NSP@health.wa.gov.au

3. Roles and Responsibilities

WACHS Regional NSP Coordinators are responsible for providing regional oversight and governance for the NSP and are responsible for program implementation across all regional NSP sites, liaison with WACHS Area Office and the SHBBVP, and ensuring program compliance, regional standardisation and consolidated reporting.

WACHS NSP Site Coordinators are responsible for supporting the operational delivery of the NSP at their designated site and are responsible for day-to-day service provision in line with WACHS policy and guideline(s).

The **Department of Health's SHBBVP** is responsible for coordinating the state-wide NSP, under direction from the Director, Communicable Disease Control Directorate (delegate to the Department of Health, Chief Executive Officer). The SHBBVP aims to support NSP services across the state by providing:

- administration assistance with NSP (including approval application, renewal and amendments)
- operational assistance (such as development and distribution of resources, referral agency lists, stock supply assistance etc.)
- support for training and workforce development
- policy development (at a state and local level).

Detailed roles and responsibilities are outlined in the [Needle and Syringe Program Policy](#), Section 3. Roles and Responsibilities (see Appendix 1).

All staff are required to comply with the directions in WACHS policies and procedures as per their roles and responsibilities. Guidelines are the recommended course of action for WACHS, and staff are expected to use this information to guide practice. If staff are unsure which policies procedures and guidelines apply to their role or scope of practice, and/or are unsure of the application of directions they should consult their manager in the first instance.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Under the Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016, all WACHS NSP sites are required to submit an annual report (online survey) and report on any irregularities of the program to the Director, Communicable Disease Control Directorate (CDCD), as delegate to the Department of Health, Chief Executive Officer. The SHBBVP assists the Director in this role.

The annual report online survey will be provided by the SHBBVP to all WACHS NSP Site Coordinators to collect annual report data. The survey includes questions on matters such as:

- service provision [e.g. the types of referrals made through the NSP (e.g. to an outpatient clinic for hepatitis C testing)
- the type of information/resources distributed to clients (e.g. a pamphlet on hepatitis C testing and treatment)
- disposal matters
- operational matters
- professional development.

NSP staff are responsible for recording the number of needles and syringes ordered – and where possible distributed – and assisting with the collection of other basic information as requested. No record is to be made of client names or personal details.

Any NSP service issues are to be reported to the NSP Site Coordinator. The NSP Site Coordinator is to attend to any issues emerging from the ongoing operation of the program and report to the WACHS NSP Regional Coordinator who will escalate to the WACHS NSP Lead and Sexual Health and Blood- borne Virus Program if required.

5. References

Department of Health (2026). Guideline template for the operation of a needle and syringe program (NSP).

6. Document Summary

Coverage	WACHS-<Region>
Audience	WACHS NSP Site Coordinators and staff involved in coordination and provision of the NSP in WACHS.
Records Management	Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy
Related Legislation	• Medicines and Poisons Act 2014 (WA) • Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016 (WA)
Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks	• MP 0124/19 Code of Conduct • Public Health Framework • Clinical Governance, Safety and Quality Framework
Related WACHS Policy Documents	• Infection Prevention and Control Policy • Needle and Syringe Program Policy • Risk Management Policy • WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015-2030
Other Related Documents	• DoH Guideline: Provision of needle and syringe programs (NSP) in Western Australia • DoH Guidelines for The Operation and Maintenance of Needle and Syringe Vending Machines (NSVMs) and Needle and Syringe Dispensing Machines (NSDMs)
Related Forms	Nil
Related Training	Available from MyLearning: • WACHS Needle and Syringe Program eLearning (WNSP EL2) • Understanding and Reducing Blood-borne Virus Stigma and Discrimination (health.wa.gov.au) Available from mental Health Commission: • NSP Online Orientation and Training Package (https://aodelearning.mhc.wa.gov.au/)
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)	ISD Record ID: 6352
National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards	1.15
Aged Care Quality Standards	Nil
Chief Psychiatrist's Standards for Clinical Care	Nil
Other Standards (please specify and include link)	Nil

7. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
1.00	18 September 2026	18 September 2026	New guideline

8. Approval

Policy Owner	Executive Director Clinical Excellence
Co-approver	Nil
Contact	Area Office Program Officer
Business Unit	Public Health
EDRMS #	ED-WA-26-459702
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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

Appendix A: WACHS Needle and Syringe Program Policy, Section 3. Roles and Responsibilities

Site NSP Coordinators are responsible for:

- ensuring that relevant NSP training and induction, facilitated by the Regional NSP Coordinator, are completed
- taking responsibility for the operational delivery of the NSP at their designated site in accordance with WACHS policy and guideline(s), with guidance from the relevant Regional NSP Coordinator as required
- ensuring sterile injecting equipment is available during site's operating hours, including arrangements for after-hours access where applicable
- ensuring correct storage, handling and distribution of NSP equipment in line with legislative and organisational requirements
- completing site-level NSP reporting accurately and submitting data within required timeframes
- completing the annual survey provided by the SHBBVP by the specified date to fulfill the requirement under the Medicines and Poisons Act 2016 for an annual report to be completed
- liaising with Regional NSP Coordinator regarding operational issues, compliance concerns and client interactions standards
- implementing changes to the service delivery as directed by the Regional NSP Coordinator or WACHS Area Office
- promoting NSP awareness within their site, including health promotion campaign messages, updates on policy changes or operational requirements
- ensuring that proxy is appointed during extended (>2 weeks) leave and communicating the arrangement to the Regional NSP Coordinator.

Managers are responsible for:

- ensuring staff are informed of this policy through induction and available education
- promoting NSP awareness via staff communications and the NSP intranet page
- ensuring staff NSP training compliance, where applicable.

Regional NSP Coordinators are responsible for:

- regional oversight of the NSP, ensuring consistent program implementation across all sites in alignment with WACHS policies and guidelines, CDCD guideline, and harm reduction principles
- monitoring and supporting site(s) compliance with legislative requirements, including the Medicines and Poisons Act 2014, and Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016
- facilitating communication and coordination between NSP sites to ensure standardised service delivery
- in consultation with managers, ensuring staff are appropriately inducted, trained and supported
- providing procedural guidance to site coordinators and managers on operational and compliance matters reviewing regional NSP data and supporting consolidated reports for submission to SHBBVP via WACHS Area Office
- participating in the Regional NSP Group, contributing to program development and continuous improvement initiatives
- escalating significant program risks, incidents, or operational concerns through the appropriate governance pathways

- maintaining records of regional program activities and correspondence in accordance with WACHS Records Management Policy
- assisting WACHS Area Office with financial forecasting and planning related to NSP value add items at a regional level.

WACHS Area Office Public Health Program Lead is responsible for:

- providing WACHS wide coordination, leadership, and governance of the NSP
- coordinating the Regional NSP Group, ensuring agendas and follow-up actions are maintained, and escalating issues or risks to the NSP Governance Group
- monitoring completion of NSP training as required by WACHS staff and supporting NSP coordinators in addressing compliance gaps
- reviewing regional WACHS NSP data and reports, ensuring accuracy and consistency prior to formal submission to SHBBVP
- monitoring WACHS NSP performance at a WACHS wide level
- ensuring relevant WACHS executive are briefed on NSP matters relevant to their jurisdiction
- co-ordinating NSP policy review and evaluation activities.

WACHS District Directors are responsible for:

- ensuring compliance with this policy across their districts through appropriate governance mechanisms
- supporting Regional NSP Coordinators in addressing compliance issues within their scope
- ensuring district resources including infrastructure, systems, and processes are in place to support effective program implementation in consultation with Regional NSP Coordinators, ensuring regional processes and monitoring mechanisms align with policy requirements.

All staff are required to comply with the directions in WACHS policies and procedures as per their roles and responsibilities. If staff are unsure which policies procedures and guidelines apply to their role or scope of practice, and/or are unsure of the application of directions they should consult their manager in the first instance.

Appendix C: NSP site specific information template

Site Coordinator – this template is the coversheet for your site guideline. Please complete with the:

- Operating hours of your site as outlined in your site license (Poisons Permit)
- Name and details of your Regional NSP Coordinator.

Location of Needle and Syringe Program (NSP)	Operating Hours (as per site licence)

Regional NSP Coordinator name	
Region	
Contact number	
Email	