

Secondary syringe exchange as a model for HIV prevention programs in the Russian Federation

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Abstract

Effective prevention of syringe-borne transmission of HIV and the hepatitis viruses can be undermined if contact between injection drug users and the staff of prevention programs is impeded by police harassment, limited program resources, and the absence of an open "drug scene." All these are commonplace in the Russian Federation. In response, "Project Renewal," the harm reduction program of the AIDS Prevention and Control Center of the Tatarstan Ministry of Health in Kazan, has created a hybrid syringe exchange program that as its primary focus recruited and trained volunteers to provide secondary syringe exchange. To compensate for operational barriers, the program staff identified private venues and trained responsible individuals to work through their own and related networks of injectors to provide clean syringes, other harm reduction supplies, and educational materials, while facilitating the collection and removal of used and potentially contaminated syringes. Program staff developed a detailed set of tracking instruments to monitor, on a daily and weekly basis, the locations and types of contacts and the dissemination of trainings and materials to ensure that the secondary distribution network reaches its target audience. Data show that these secondary exchange sites have proven more productive than the primary mobile and fixed-site syringe exchanges in Kazan. Beginning in 2001, Project Renewal has trained other harm reduction programs in the Russian Federation to use this model of reaching injectors, identifying and training volunteers, and monitoring results of secondary syringe exchange. Copyright © 2006 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

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Keywords

Drug scene, Harm reduction, HIV risk, Injection drug use, Outreach site host, Rapid situation assessment, Russia, Syringe exchange