

BLOOD BORNE INFECTION AND PEER EDUCATOR TRAINING: ADAPTING MATERIALS TO DELIVER COURSEWORK DURING AN EVOLVING PANDEMIC

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Background: HEP works with the Washington State Department of Corrections (WA DOC) by contract to conduct blood borne infection (BBI), harm reduction, and peer educator trainings at the prisons throughout Washington state. WA DOC suspended in-person service delivery in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. HEP modified and adapted educational materials for mail-in correspondence delivery for people experiencing incarceration while spatial distancing measures were in place.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention: The curriculum covers transmission, prevention, and treatment of BBIs, as well as harm reduction methods. These courses use evidence-based curriculum to teach students safer options to reduce drug, tattoo, and sexual risk factors for transmission of HIV and viral hepatitis. In peer educator trainings, students are trained in communication tools for sharing harm reduction education with their peers while incarcerated and after their release. Materials for the courses provide culturally competent education to a population that is disproportionately affected by HIV and viral hepatitis to raise awareness to those most at-risk of contracting or spreading infections. Course curriculums were modified in order to be self-directed by students. Diligent steps were taken to ensure that materials were understandable and impactful.

Effectiveness: Student demand for and participation in the classes increased following spatial distancing measures. Student interest increased from 20% - 825% in different WA DOC facilities. There is no statistically significant difference in post-test data from in-person delivery of peer educator training compared to remote, correspondence delivery. Qualitative data collected during pre and post-tests indicate that students were grateful to have the opportunity to participate in programming during quarantines and isolation.

Conclusion and Next Steps: Delivery of BBI, harm reduction, and peer educator trainings in the correctional setting is essential. Despite administrative restrictions on in-person classes, remote delivery is a viable alternative option until in-person programming resumes.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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