



CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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Prison Needle Exchange Program in CSC: Program Update

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Prison Needle Exchange in CSC

BACKGROUND

Rationale:

- Consistent with the Canadian Drug and Substance Strategy (CDSS) and prevention recommendations from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Correctional Service Canada (CSC) launched a prison-based needle exchange program (PNEP) in June 2018

Objectives:

- to reduce sharing of non-sterile needles
- to increase opportunities to provide health teaching, health promotion and treatment
- to reduce transmission of blood borne viral infection including HIV and HCV; and
- to reduce the occurrence of skin infections related to injection drug use

Application and Approval Process:

- Offender submits request to Health Services
- Nurse reviews PNEP program, process, and expectations
- Operations completes a threat risk assessment, which is similar to the ones completed for Epipens and needles used for insulin use, to assess whether there are any security concerns related to an inmate's participation in PNEP
- Approved participants sign contract outlining expectations and are issued a PNEP kit
- PNEP kit exchange process and storage requirements are managed by the site

PNEP Kit:

- Case (transparent hard plastic snap-closure lid)
- Sterile safety cap needle / syringe (1ml 27 gauge)
- Sterile mixing cup
- 5-pack filters
- Vitamin C
- sterile water





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CURRENT STATUS*

PNEP Rollout

- PNEP was initially implemented at Grand Valley Institution for Women and Atlantic Institution in June 2018
- Following a “lessons learned” review of those two sites, PNEP is now fully implemented at all 5 women’s sites (Nova, Joliette, Grand Valley, Edmonton Institution for Women, and Fraser Valley) and 4 men’s sites (Atlantic Institution (Max), Dorchester Penitentiary (Med), Joyceville Institution (Min), and Mission Institution (Med))
- In addition PNEP implementation readiness has been completed at another 2 sites (Bowden Institution and Warkworth Institution) although program launch has been delayed at these sites due to the demands of the Covid-19 pandemic response
- PNEP roll-out includes consultation with the site over a 3 day implementation visit, including site management, institutional occupational health committee, inmate committee, and the Community Advisory Committee.

Step	Number (%)
PNEP Requests	185
Information Only	24 (13%)
Opted for OAT	6 (3%)
TRA Submitted	130
TRA Approved	112 (86%)
Current PNEP Participants	38 (34%)
Temporarily Discontinued	17 (15%)
Opted for OAT	9 (8%)
Withdrew / Released / Transferred	48 (43%)

* as of October 2020



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INTERIM EVALUATION

Interim PNEP Evaluation

- CSC has contracted with an independent external academic with expertise in harm reduction program evaluation to review the PNEP. It will involve a review of PNEP implementation Process and the Outcomes
 - The Process Evaluation will determine both the **feasibility** (interviewing staff) and the **acceptability** (interviewing offenders and PNEP participants) of the PNEP program
 - To date, evaluation visits have been conducted with 6 sites (5 women's sites plus Atlantic Institution)
 - Three themes have emerged:
 1. Low Rates of Participation in the PNEP in some institutions
 - some sites have not had any expressions of interest or PNEP participants
 2. Barriers exist to the successful PNEP implementation and use
 - Adequate preparation of the site for implementation, concerns regarding needle-stick injuries and confusion over Parole Board of Canada (PBC) involvement
 3. Access to other Harm Reduction Services
 - Access to OAT and long waitlist; access to safe snorting supplies; Provision of Naloxone; access to a Safe Tattooing program
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CONCLUSIONS

Response to Interim Evaluation Findings

- Updated health promotion materials, explicitly outlining that PNEP participation will NOT be shared with the PBC
- Consultations with sites to review program implementation and progress
- Develop staff material and strategies to address stigma associated with addictions, substance use, and harm reduction
- Examine possibility of distributing safer snorting supplies (i.e., paper straws)
- Continue to expand access to OAT and address structural or resource barriers to OAT uptake
- Revised policy to ensure offender access to Naloxone in living units
- Consider access to intermittent PrEP for offenders getting a range tattoo

Conclusion

- CSC continues to work to address the Interim PNEP evaluation findings and recommendations
 - PNEP is a viable harm reduction program in CSC in order to reduce the sharing of non-sterile needles and prevent HIV/HCV transmission
 - By facilitating non-judgemental clinical discussions on drug use in healthcare, PNEP has been successful at streaming patients with addictions into alternate modes of care
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