



**Campaign for a Healthier New Jersey**

# Frequently Asked Questions About Syringe Access

## **Don't all states require a prescription to purchase a syringe?**

- No. As a matter of fact, New Jersey is one of only 3 states (Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania) that requires a prescription to purchase a syringe.

## **Are New Jersey's laws on syringe access out of line with the national trend?**

- Yes. New Jersey has some of the harshest laws on syringe access in the country. We are one of only six states that require a prescription to purchase a syringe, and even in other states that require a prescription, like California and Pennsylvania, the state or some local municipalities authorize public health programs to provide syringe exchange services.

## **Does access to sterile syringes encourage drug use?**

- No. Six government reports have concurred that access to sterile syringes does not increase drug use. No reports contradict these findings.
- Donna Shalala, former Secretary of Health and Human Services has said, "A meticulous scientific review has now proven that needle exchange programs can reduce the transmission of HIV and save lives without losing ground in the battle against illegal drugs."

## **Does access to sterile syringes hinder other drug treatment efforts?**

- No. In fact, many people who visit public health organizations that provide syringe exchange also get referrals to drug treatment and other social services.
- A study found that a Tacoma, Washington, syringe exchange program was the single largest source of recruitment to methadone maintenance programs in the county.

## **Does access to sterile syringes increase the number of improperly discarded syringes?**

- No. In fact, some neighborhoods where syringe access programs exist have reported a decrease in improperly discarded syringes. Studies in Portland, Oregon, and Baltimore, Maryland found similar or decreased numbers of improperly discarded syringes. No study has found an increase in improperly discarded syringes.
- Public health programs which provide syringe exchange services and pharmacies where syringes are sold are also convenient locations for proper syringe disposal.
- Because injection drug users can be arrested for carrying a syringe, they are afraid of properly disposing of syringes by bringing them to hospitals, pharmacies, or public health organizations that provide syringe disposal services. Removing legal sanctions against syringe possession encourages proper disposal.

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