

**Attachment A**  
**2010-11 Syringe Exchange Program Report**  
**Santa Barbara County Public Health Department**

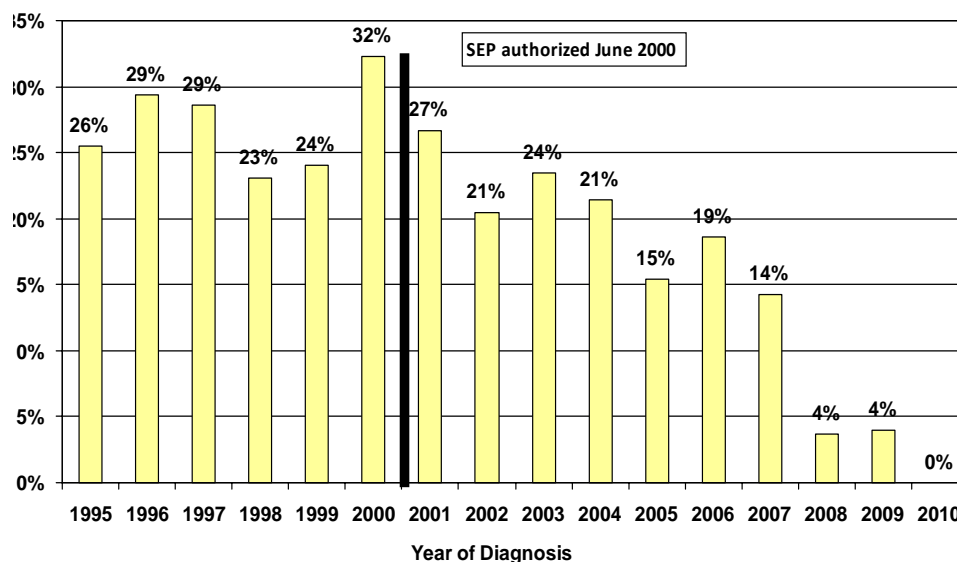
**Introduction**

The Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) was authorized by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors in 2000 to reduce the spread of HIV and other blood-borne diseases through needle sharing. In 1997 a report to Congress concluded that syringe or needle exchange programs can be a highly effective component of a comprehensive strategy to prevent HIV and other infectious diseases.<sup>1</sup> The National Institutes of Health Consensus Panel on HIV Prevention found that SEP can produce reductions in risk behavior as high as 80%, with estimates of a 30% or greater reduction of HIV among injection drug users.<sup>2</sup>

**Injection Drug Use and HIV Transmission**

The graph below shows the percentage of new AIDS and HIV cases in Santa Barbara County each year between 1995 and 2010 that indicated injection drug use (IDU) as a risk factor. Since the inception of the Syringe Exchange Program in June 2000, the percentage of HIV/AIDS infections with IDU as a risk factor declined from 32% to 0%. Further, no overall increase in injection drug use was noted during this period.

**Injection Drug Use as Mode of HIV Transmission**  
**Santa Barbara County 1995-2010**



**Syringe Exchange Program Data**

Pacific Pride Foundation operates *The Right Outfit* Syringe Exchange Program through its two locations in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria. Program staff provide risk management and harm reduction education, substance abuse counseling, HIV and Hepatitis C testing, and needed referrals, in addition to 1-1 exchange of new syringes for contaminated ones. The program is supported entirely by private funds.

Program staff collect data on the number of syringes collected and distributed, client characteristics, and services provided during each visit. The following information was collected during 2010-2011:

- 514 clients, 394 in South County and 120 in North County, participated in the program
- 68% of clients were male, 32% female, with an average age of 42
- 61% of clients identified as Caucasian, 33% as Hispanic/Latino, 2% as American Indian, 1% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% as African American, and 2% as Other

- 1,840 exchanges were completed, 1,367 in South County and 473 in North County
- 79,462 sterile syringes were distributed
- 84,975 contaminated syringes were collected and properly disposed of, reducing the number of used syringes on the street by 5,513

The following program impacts were noted:

- 100% of clients were offered HIV and Hep C testing
- 100% were provided with IDU-specific harm reduction educational materials, HIV, Hep C, and STI educational materials, and biohazard containers
- 70% were referred to substance abuse counseling services (many had recently been referred)
- 34% were referred directly to mental health services
- 33% were referred for additional STI testing
- 18% were tested for HIV during an exchange visit, while more returned for a test outside of SEP program hours
- 6% were referred and enrolled in local food and shelter programs

The following client stories illustrate the impact of the SEP on a personal level:

*A female client in her late 30s has been part of the exchange program for several years. She had made several attempts to stop using but was unsuccessful. Overtime she began to trust the exchange staff and was able to confide in them. About six months ago she came to the exchange in tears. Her addiction was out of control. She was afraid for her life and the life of her partner. The client and her partner were both referred to a local out-patient treatment program. To ensure their success they were also linked to Pacific Pride Foundation's Counseling and Recovery Services department. Both women are still receiving regular therapy sessions and continuing on the road to recovery.*

*A female client in her early 20s began using the North County Exchange late last year. She was very young and somewhat naïve about the many dangers of intravenous drug use. The exchange staff was able to provide her with risk reduction and disease prevention information as well as HIV/HEP C testing. After several visits to the program she felt comfortable enough to confide in the exchange staff. She had only been using for about a year but was now unable to stop. She wanted to get help but was afraid that if anyone found out that she would lose custody of her children. Our staff was able to link her to a local in-patient recovery program that specializes in working with at-risk mothers. She was able to enroll in the program and keep her children with her in a safe and supportive environment.*

## **Conclusions**

The Syringe Exchange Program saves lives and promotes individual and community health by reducing the transmission of HIV and other blood-borne diseases. Additionally, the Syringe Exchange Program provides hundreds of clients, many of whom are homeless, with risk management and harm reduction education, substance abuse and mental health counseling, HIV and Hepatitis C testing, and referrals for food, shelter, medical care, and other needs. Being entirely supported with private funding, the program is a highly cost-effective method for reducing HIV, Hepatitis C, and other blood-borne infections, and the related treatment costs, among one of the highest risk populations in Santa Barbara County.

<sup>1</sup> Shalala, DE. *Needle Exchange Programs in America: Review of Published Studies and Ongoing Research*. Report to the Committee on Appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. February 18, 1997

<sup>2</sup> National Institutes of Health. Consensus Development Statement. Interventions to prevent HIV risk behaviors, February 11-13, 1997:7-8.