

Northern Exchange

Alaska's Syringe Exchange Program Harm Reduction Services since 1989

More than a million people in the United States inject drugs. People who inject drugs imperil their health. If they contract HIV, their needle sharing partners, sexual partners and offspring may also be endangered.

One-third of all AIDS cases are linked to injection drug use. For women, 71% of all AIDS cases are due to injection drug use or sex with partners who have injected drugs. Injection drug use is the source of infection for 70% of children born with HIV.

The volunteers who began NORTHERN EXCHANGE were individuals with experience in drug treatment and drug using communities. They made the commitment to syringe exchange after they tested 39 active users for HIV and discovered that all of them were HIV-negative. Northern Exchange, was, and remains, an effort to insure that all injection drug users in Alaska have access to the information and equipment they need to protect themselves, the people they love and their communities.

- Research clearly shows that syringe exchange programs do not lead to an increase in drug use
- In New Haven, Connecticut, needle exchange reduced HIV transmission by 33% within the first 8 months of operation
- In Tacoma, WA, the exchange is the largest single referral source to treatment in that county
- Taxpayers save money if a needle exchange program prevents 1 in 4 new HIV infections

NORTHERN EXCHANGE is a response to the HIV risk reduction needs of the people in our communities whose lives are impacted by drug use. Behavior change is the key to stopping the spread of HIV, but people must have access to information, tools and support in order to make behavior change a reality in their lives. While treatment is a positive choice for some, many others are not ready or do not want treatment. **Those who are not in treatment, or do not believe that treatment is an option, must still have access to potentially life-saving services.**

SYRINGE EXCHANGE IS ABOUT COMPASSION, RESPECT AND SAVING LIVES.

For additional information about syringe exchange in Alaska, contact:

Northern Exchange
PO Box 71248
Fairbanks, AK 99707

For services call (907):

Fairbanks: 452-4222
Juneau: 463 5665

"First, let's talk about these so-called junkies that we're all committed to working with. They are people like us. They are our brothers, our sisters, our mothers, our fathers, our friends, our lovers and ourselves."

Harry Simpson, Executive Director
Community Health Awareness Group
Detroit