

## Security and Disposal of Needles, Syringes and Clinical Sharps

**Policy Number** 5.130

**Policy Function** Safe Practice and Environment

**Issue Date** 2 December 2022

**Summary** This policy outlines the responsibility of Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (Justice Health, NSW) staff in safe and ongoing security for the receipt, storage and disposal of used and unused syringes, needles and clinical sharps in the Network Health Centres and Hospitals

**Responsible Officer** Executive Director Clinical Operations

**Applicable Sites**

- ☐ Administration Centres
- ☐ Community Sites (e.g. Court Liaison Service, Community Integration Team, etc.)
- ☒ Health Centres (Adult Correctional Centres or Police Cells)
- ☐ Health Centres (Youth Justice)
- ☒ Long Bay Hospital
- ☐ The Forensic Hospital

**Previous Issue(s)** Policy 5.130 (January 2019; September 2015; December 2012)

**Change Summary**

- Changes branding from Network to Justice Health,
- Update hyperlinks to new intranet
- Removed Youth Justice and the Forensic Hospital as applicable sites.

**TRIM Reference** POLJH/5130

**Authorised by** Chair, Policy Steering Committee

## 1. Preface

This policy has been developed to meet the legislation- Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Act 2016 No 47 requirements for ensuring the security of needles, syringes and sharps in the control and custody of Justice Health staff within Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW), Youth Justice (YJ) Health Centres, and privately operated premises. Conveyance of a non-approved needle, syringe or clinical sharp into a correctional centre contravenes legislation and carries a penalty of imprisonment for a term not exceeding two (2) years.

This policy outlines the responsibility of Network staff in the safe receipt, storage, monitoring and disposal of needles, syringes and clinical sharps in the Network Health Centres and Hospitals.

## 2. Policy Content

### 2.1 Mandatory Requirements

Strict monitoring and supervisory procedures must be implemented to ensure accurate recording, storage and disposal of needles, syringes and clinical sharps. The bulk stock of needles, syringes and clinical sharps are to be stored in a locked cupboard, locked room or locked trolley within the health centre and controlled solely by Network staff

Each health centre must have a lockable room, lockable cupboard or lockable trolley to store the working stock of needles, syringes and clinical sharps. The receipt, storage and use of the needles, syringes and clinical sharps must be recorded as described in this policy. It is not necessary to record the disposal of a used needle, syringe or clinical sharp because, when signing for use, the healthcare worker is also acknowledging responsibility for its immediate, secure disposal.

All staff must be conscious of potential distractions that may enable patients to access used or unused needles, syringes and clinical sharps. Smaller health centres may store bulk and working stock in the same location. All staff must also be aware that an unsupervised patient may quickly gain access into a sharps container, or into a locked clinical waste bin that contains sharps containers.

All health centres must use the needles, syringes and clinical sharps templates: HPRM document: DG6387/18, Template – Needle and Syringe Register to record the receipt and use of needles, syringes and DG100905/20, Template- Clinical Sharps Register to record the receipt and use of clinical sharps. If there is more than one location for the storage of needles, syringes and clinical sharps in the correctional centre, a separate register must be kept for each location, for example, in the dental room, Public Sexual Health Nurse trolley or satellite health centre. The checks must be saved at the end of each month into HPRM container MEDICINES AND POISONS – audits – Needles, Syringe and Clinical Sharps Register. The HPRM documents must be named as per Standard Titling Practices of the HPRM For example "Needle and Syringe Register Checks *Health Centre Name and satellite area (if applicable)* Month Year".

### 2.2 Implementation - Roles & Responsibilities

All Network staff within CSNSW, Youth Justice and privately operated premises must ensure that this policy for the receipt, storage, use and disposal of needles, syringes and clinical sharps practice is adhered to.

## 3. Procedure Content

### 3.1 Security for Receipt and Storage of Needles, Syringes and Clinical Sharps

The nominated Justice Health staff who receives and unpacks new stock of needles, syringes and clinical sharps must record receipt into the designated Register. The Register must include an item description and balance and the entry is to be countersigned by the nominated CSNSW Officer or privately operated Officer. A working stock will be determined and replenished by the NUM/NIC (not for the Dental Rooms – see 3.4) as appropriate and signed out by the Network staff at each time of use. Each month the balance of stock must be counted, recorded and the register countersigned by the nominated CSNSW, Youth Justice or privately operated Officer and Network delegated staff member.

### 3.2 Needles, Syringes and Clinical Sharps included in the register checks

Needles and Syringes include: hypodermic needles of all sizes and types, including all blunt fill needles, all scalp vein needles, sterile dental injection needles, all sizes of intravenous access devices (cannulas and blood collection sets) and all sizes of syringes, including endodontic irrigation syringe/tips.

Clinical Sharps include any device that can cut or puncture the skin, for example: glass vials, needles, syringes, lancets, scalpels etc.

Health Centre stores: suture removal packs, stitch cutter blades, sterile suture packs, one piece scalpels, single use general scissors, single use sterile forceps, general surgical scissors and nail clippers .

Dental Room stores: sutures, suture packs, scalpels, and dental elevators.

### 3.3 Needles, Syringes and Clinical Sharps not included in the Register

Needles, syringes and clinical sharps stored in the Emergency First Aid bags must be checked daily and do not require a separate register, however, any unaccounted loss of needles, syringes and clinical sharps from the emergency bags must be reported to the NUM, CSNSW, Youth Justice or privately operated Officer . Pre-filled medication syringes, vaccines and Minijets from Pharmacy do not need to be counted, but must be stored securely in the vaccine refrigerator or in the medication imprest area of the medication room and any unaccounted loss of pre-filled medication syringes, vaccines and/or Minijets must be reported to the NUM, CSNSW, Youth Justice or privately operated Officer. Insulin pen needles do not need to be checked but must be stored securely in the medication dispensary room of the health centre.

Dental hand instruments in examination, restorative and periodontal packs including dental probes, curettes, scalers and curved tip irrigation syringes do not need to be entered into a separate register. These items must be stored securely at all times, and counted during the Dental Instrument Inventory Audit every 3 months.

### 3.4 Dental Rooms

Oral Health uses a single disposable needle syringe device for dental injections. The stock of short and long safety needle are ordered by Oral Health staff in each facility. The stock of each type of needle should not exceed one box of each length needle (100 units per box) plus the working stock. The bulk and working stock

must be stored securely in locked cupboards in the Dental Room. The Dental Room is locked after each dental clinic.

The Dental Assistant and Dental Officer complete a pre-clinic needle count and the number is recorded on the register. The dental assistant must record the date, patient's name, number of needles used, and sign off after each patient. A stock balance count is completed at the end of the clinic. This balance is checked, entered and signed on the register by both the Dental Assistant and the Dental Officer. Any unaccounted needles are to be reported to the NUM, and the Operations Manager, Primary Care – Services & Programs.

Dental Assistants will count the Clinical Sharps included at 3.2 on a monthly basis. Clinical sharp numbers will be compared against those on the Dental Instrument Inventory Audit for each clinic and recorded accordingly. Any unaccounted sharps are to be reported to the Operations Manager Primary Care – Services & Programs and the NUM immediately.

The NUM at each facility with a dental room must monitor that the registers are up to date. Not all Health Centres with Dental Rooms host monthly dental clinics. At these Centres, the Dental team will complete the required Register count at each rotation.

Copies of completed dental room registers will be provided to NUM (or delegate) for review, sign off and saving into HPRM each month.

### **3.5 Security for the Disposal of Needles, Syringes and Clinical Sharps**

All needles, syringes and clinical sharps must be safely disposed of immediately or as soon as practical after use, directly into an approved sharps container. This includes hollow-bore needles, suture needles, cannulas, blood collection sets, scalpel blades, lancets (includes safety lancets), sharp instruments (disposable or reusable), stitch cutters, and any other object capable of inflicting a penetrating injury.

Sharps containers must be placed (either temporarily or permanently) as close as possible to the point of use to limit the distance between use and disposal. Kidney dishes or similar must not be used to either hold or transfer used syringes, needles and clinical sharps to the sharps container for disposal. Sharps containers must not be placed where patients can access them.

Used needles, syringes and clinical sharps must not be accessible to others. Security of sharps containers includes ensuring a patient never has unsupervised access to a sharps container or a clinical waste bin (as sealed full sharps containers are disposed in these bins).

### **3.6 Reporting Unaccounted or Unsecured Needles, Syringes and Clinical Sharps**

If there is a discrepancy in the needle, syringe or clinical sharps count, a local review must be undertaken of all needles, syringes and clinical sharps used since the previous correct count and balance. Late entries must be recorded as a "late entry" in the register. If the NUM or NIC is unable to locate or account for the discrepancy, the loss must be reported to the Cluster Nurse Manager (CNM), Operations Manager Primary Care – Services & Programs (if dental sharp) and the CSNSW, Youth Justice or privately operated Health Centre Officer as soon as practicable. A Network investigation may be required.

Any incident of non-secure receipt, storage, use or disposal of needles, syringes and clinical sharps must be reported to the NUM or CNM as soon as practicable. The incident, investigation and subsequent actions must be reported in the *Incident Management System* (IMS+).

## 4. Definitions

### Must

Indicates a mandatory action to be complied with.

### Should

Indicates a recommended action to be complied with unless there are sound reasons for taking a different course of action.

## 5. Legislation and Related Documents

JH&FMHN Policies and  
Procedures

[2.030](#) *Incident Management*

[2.155](#) *Enterprise Wide Risk management*

[5.070](#) *Infection Prevention and Control*

CSNSW

COPP 16.8 Health Centre Security

Justice NSW

[Crimes \(Administration of Sentences\) Amendment Act 2016 No 47](#)