



A GROWING NEED: YOUNG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS FACE BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Barriers to Access for Youth

Despite the pressing need, young PWID have less access to core services than adult injecting drug users.

- Inability to pay for services and medication
- Age limitations restricting access services
- Requirement of a parent/guardian's consent
- Lack of confidentiality due to notification of parents when accessing services
- Registration requirements that cause youth to fear for their future prospects
- Aiding and abetting legislation that often lead to prosecution of young drug users and discourage harm reduction programs from working with them
- Lack of youth-friendly services
- Low awareness of available health, social, legal, and welfare services
- Stigma surrounding injecting drug use and HIV

People who inject drugs (PWID) are stigmatized and marginalized throughout the world. Biological, behavioral, and other structural factors put them at higher risk for HIV transmission. At the same time, a wide array of policy barriers restrict injecting drug users' access to key hepatitis, HIV, drug treatment, and harm reduction services.

In many places, people are beginning to inject drugs at younger ages than ever before. Thus, there is an urgent need to expand young people's access to core drug treatment, harm reduction, HIV, and hepatitis services. Policies restricting young injecting drug users' access to services significantly undermine efforts to curb the HIV epidemic by excluding the population with the highest need for such services and preventing early and comprehensive interventions.

Increased Risk

Youth who inject drugs are subject to increased social, economic, and health risks and vulnerabilities. They are more likely to

- Be exposed to high-risk environments, including living on the streets, orphanages, foster care, and juvenile detention;
- Have little awareness of HIV and other risks associated with injecting drug use;
- Share injection equipment;
- Drop out of school and suffer from economic instability, which leads them to engage in crime or sex work;
- Be vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation, as well as discrimination and abuse by law enforcement;
- Experience negative impacts, as the longer a person uses drugs, the more severe the long-term health, social, and economic consequences, as well as behavioral risks;
- Engage in polysubstance abuse than those whose injecting drug use begins later in life; and
- Suffer social consequences, including family conflict, having to leave home, and isolation.

Detailed technical guidance

HIV Prevention among Young Injecting Drug Users:

http://www.unodc.org/pdf/youthnet/handbook_hiv_english.pdf

To access the tool, please visit:

www.healthpolicyproject.com/t/HIVPolicyModels.cfm

How the Decision Model Can Help

The *Policy Analysis and Advocacy Decision Model for Services for People Who Inject Drugs* can be used to address barriers to access faced by youth who inject drugs. The complex and dynamic policy environment surrounding services for drug users poses a challenge to analysts, advocates, and decisionmakers alike. The decision model is a collection of tools that can be used to make sense of this complexity.

The model can be used to identify and address policy barriers that restrict the provision of and access to high-quality hepatitis, HIV, drug treatment, and harm reduction programs for people who inject drugs. The decision model is designed to identify the existence of restrictive, poorly written, and absent policies related to services for PWID. It provides background information on the overall policy framework and includes tools that collect various quantitative and qualitative data on policy language and implementation, collate the quantitative data for easy comparison, and provide basic steps to create an advocacy strategy and set priorities.

List of Tools

- **Policy Inventory and Analysis.** Instruments and procedures guide users in compiling a reference library of key policy documents. The analytic framework can then be applied to assess the extent to which policies enable or restrict implementation of key services in comparison with international best practices.
- **Policy Implementation Assessment Interviews.** Survey instruments guide users in collecting the opinions and experiences of key informants, services providers, and clients regarding the perception and implementation of policies, which will help them understand whether to focus on changing policy language or on policy dissemination/implementation.
- **Policy Advocacy Planning Worksheets.** These worksheets help users identify and prioritize policy issues, engage stakeholders, and conduct advocacy campaigns. Key topics include the following:
 - Effective advocacy committee design
 - Analysis of political, social, and economic contexts
 - Stakeholder mapping
 - Understanding of the policymaking process
 - Issue framing
 - Prioritization of advocacy efforts
 - Effective use of international law/human rights agreements
 - Target audience identification
 - Crafting of successful advocacy messages

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