



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**
Public and Aboriginal Health Division

Communicable Disease Control Directorate Guidelines

Guidelines for the Operation and Maintenance of Needle and Syringe Vending Machines (NSVM) and Needle and Syringe Dispensing Machines (NSDM)

Guideline 0002 / January 2022

These guidelines have been released by the Communicable Disease Control Directorate, Public and Aboriginal Health Division, Western Australian Department of Health, to provide consistent and evidence informed advice to agencies involved in the prevention of infections and management of communicable diseases in Western Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY AND PEOPLE

The Communicable Disease Control Directorate at the Department of Health acknowledge the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. We acknowledge the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders both past and present and pay respect to Aboriginal communities of today.

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1. Definitions / Acronyms

Term	Definition
Needle and syringe dispensing machine (NSDM)	Self-service devices which dispense sterile injecting equipment for free.
Needle and syringe exchange program (NSEP)	Supply of free sterile needles and syringes on the return of used items.
Needle and syringe program (NSP)	Harm reduction program that provides sterile needles and syringes people who inject drugs to reduce transmission of blood-borne viruses.
Needle and syringe vending machine (NSVM)	Self-service devices which vend sterile injecting equipment on a cost-recovery basis.

2. Purpose

The aim of this Guideline is to describe the requirements for the operation and maintenance of needle and syringe vending machines (NSVMs) and needle and syringe dispensing machines (NSDMs) within Western Australia (WA).

3. Introduction / Background

The primary public health strategy in Australia to prevent the transmission of blood-borne viruses such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, among and from people who inject drugs (PWID), is to provide access to sterile needles and syringes.

In Western Australia, the [Medicines and Poisons Act 2014](#) and [Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#) provides a legislative framework for needle and syringe provision to take place through needle and syringe programs (NSPs), approved by the Department of Health, Chief Executive Officer.

Increasing access to needles and syringes as a strategy to reduce the transmission of blood-borne viruses is supported by the following state and national strategies:

- WA Hepatitis C Strategy 2019–2023
- WA Hepatitis B Strategy 2019–2023
- WA HIV Strategy 2019–2023
- WA Aboriginal Sexual Health and BBV Strategy 2019-2023

- WA Alcohol and Drug Interagency Strategy 2018-2022
- Fifth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Blood-borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2018–2022
- Fifth National Hepatitis C Strategy 2018–2022
- Third National Hepatitis B Strategy 2018–2022
- Eighth National HIV Strategy 2018-2022
- National Drug Strategy 2017-2026.

There are four models of NSPs currently operating in Western Australia:

- Needle and Syringe Exchange Programs (NSEPs) – NSEPs supply free sterile needles and syringes upon the return of used items, i.e. exchanged, or a cost recovery may apply.
- Health Service-based NSPs – outlets such as regional and rural hospitals, public health units and community health centres that provide access to free sterile needles and syringes as a component of their service.
- Pharmacy-based NSPs – pharmacy-based NSPs are run on a commercial basis via the retail of sterile needles and syringes.
- Needle and syringe vending machine (NSVM) or dispensing machine (NSDM) – self-service device which dispenses sterile injecting equipment on a cost-recovery basis (NSVM) or for no cost (NSDM).

NSVMs and NSDMs are considered complementary services to other methods of needle and syringe provision. An NSVM/NSDM can provide access to sterile needles and syringes particularly for PWID who do not wish to attend staffed NSPs, thereby retaining client anonymity. In addition, NSVM/NSDMs have the potential to alleviate some of the demands on busy individual sites which are currently providing NSP services, as well as improve availability and access in areas, which, for a variety of reasons, may be unable to provide staffed NSP outlets.

The introduction of NSVMs and NSDMs as a component of a comprehensive state-wide NSP is intended to provide equitable and anonymous access to sterile needles and syringes in order to minimise the spread of blood-borne viruses such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, among and from PWID.

This Guideline supersedes *OD 0554/14 The Operation and Maintenance of Needle and Syringe Vending Machines (NSVMs)*.

4. Requirements (of the Guideline)

4.1 Requirements for NSVM/NSDM sites

Invitations to install and operate NSVM/NSDMs will be extended to individual sites by the Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program (SHBBVP) based on the following criteria as relevant to the site:

4.1.1 Volume of needles and syringes distributed

NSVM/NSDMs have the potential to alleviate some of the demands on busy individual sites that are currently distributing needles and syringes to PWID. Individual sites that currently distribute large volumes of needles and syringes will be considered as potential sites for a NSVM/NSDM.

4.1.2 Gaps in services

Individual sites that do not currently distribute needles and syringes will be considered as potential sites for a NSVM/NSDM.

4.1.3 Availability of free needles and syringes within local area (NSVM Specific)

This criteria is specific to NSVM's as the cost to consumers for purchasing sterile injecting equipment can inhibit the access to needles and syringes. In regional areas access to sterile needles and syringes is primarily limited to pharmacies, hospitals and some public health units and community health centres. Typically, during business hours pharmacies retail needles and syringes, and public health units/community health centres distribute needles and syringes free of charge. After-hours, regional hospitals become the primary source for accessing free needles and syringes. Should a NSVM replace the free after-hours service provided by a hospital, this may limit access to needles and syringes. Therefore, the availability of other existing outlets that distribute free needles and syringes within the local area will be considered as a factor in determining the establishment of NSVM sites. As NSDM's provide products free of charge, there is less risk of limiting access to sterile equipment as the cost barrier is removed. NSVM/NSDM's

are to be considered a component of a comprehensive NSP to provide equitable and anonymous access to sterile needles and syringes.

4.2 Requirements regarding the installation of an NSVM/NSDM

4.2.1 NSVM/NSDM specifications

NSVMs/NSDMs to be installed in WA should be designed for the purpose of dispensing needles and syringes and have the following features:

- ability to dispense a range of approved injecting equipment products as defined under [4.3.4 Products to be vended \(NSVM\)](#) and [4.3.5 Products to be dispensed \(NSDM\)](#) sections of this document
- ability to operate via mains power supply or battery (as related to particular machine on site)
- appropriate protection cage fitted to ensure the machine/s are highly resistant to theft, tampering and vandalism
- suitable for outdoor use.

The type of machine to be used is also to be discussed with the SHBBVP.

4.2.2 Site requirements

It is of particular importance that the machine/s are placed in a location that ensures the following:

- adequate lighting must be provided around the machine/s in order to increase visibility of the machine/s after hours, and reduce the potential incidence of vandalism
- access to a fixed power source (mains power) as required to operate the machine/s
- suitable for discrete access, but not remote, to allow safe access by clients and staff alike
- protection from the elements i.e. under cover or an awning.

Staff from the SHBBVP can visit individual sites to assist with determining an appropriate on-site location for the NSVM/NSDM. If a suitable on-site location

cannot be identified, support to undertake minor refurbishments may be provided by negotiation with the SHBBVP.

4.2.3 Ownership of NSVM/NSDM and insurance

The NSVM/NSDM remains the property of the SHBBVP, Communicable Disease Control Directorate, Department of Health (WA). Annually, the SHBBVP declares functioning NSVM/NSDMs as assets on the Self Insurance Risk Declaration (SIRD) and insurance cover for each NSVM/NSDM is included in the Department of Health's RiskCover policy. Should a claim need to be made, the individual site manager is required to contact the SHBBVP to ensure appropriate action is taken on machine repair and on the insurance claim.

4.3 Requirements for operation of an NSVM/NSDM

4.3.1 Approval to operate an NSVM/NSDM

Requests for approval to operate a NSVM/NSDM must be submitted to the SHBBVP prior to the NSVM/NSDM being installed by the individual site. When the request is approved by the delegate of the Department of Health Chief Executive Officer, an approval as prescribed within the [Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#) will be issued.

4.3.2 Promotion of the NSVM/NSDM

Wide-spread promotional activities are not seen as appropriate in this instance, therefore promotion of the NSVM/NSDM is to be limited to the distribution of promotional material including flyers and posters to clients accessing existing services in the area, as well as other direct methods of promotion, including the use of relevant online resources. Suitable promotional material can be designed in collaboration with the Regional NSP Coordinator and the SHBBVP. Promotional material must be distributed by the individual site no less than one month prior to the NSVM/NSDM being installed and becoming operational.

4.3.3 Hours of operation

Where an NSVM/NSDM is installed to complement existing NSP services, the operating hours of the NSVM/NSDM are to be negotiated with the SHBBVP.

If a NSVM/NSDM is replacing an existing NSP, the operating hours of the NSVM/NSDM are to be consistent with current NSP times to ensure continuity of service provision and accessibility.

Where a NSVM/NSDM is replacing an existing free service, the previous NSP operating times must still be maintained if the machine is out of order. During these times, sterile needles and syringes are to be made available to clients at no cost from within the individual site, as outlined in [5.10 Malfunction of NSVM/NSDM](#) within this document.

The hours of operation are to be submitted to the SHBBVP for approval by the delegate of the Department of Health Chief Executive Officer and will be stated on individual program approvals.

4.3.4 Products to be vended (NSVM)

No limit is to be set on the number of products to be vended to each client. The types of products to be vended are to be negotiated by the individual site with the SHBBVP, but must include a minimum of two (2) products, with one being a standard (e.g. Fitpack®, Fitstick®), and the other a product with additional items (sterile water, swabs) included (e.g. Fitpack® Plus, Fitstick® Plus Pack 3, Fitstick® 5 Plus). Agreed products will be stated on individual program approvals.

The range of products available to be vended along with the recommended vend price per unit, is set out in [Appendix 1 – Product list](#) of this document.

4.3.5 Products to be dispensed (NSDM)

No limit is to be set on the number of products to be dispensed to each client. Currently there is only one type of product to be dispensed via this machine, which is the Fitstick® product, as supplied by the SHBBVP.

The contents of the Fitstick® product is detailed in [Appendix 1 – Product list](#) of this document.

4.3.6 NSVM Revenue

Appropriate cash handling mechanisms should be in place to collect revenue that has been received through the NSVM.

Revenue derived from the sale of products vended from the NSVM is to be expended on the future purchase of products for the machine, as well as ongoing costs associated with the NSVM including electricity, service and maintenance.

Should ongoing costs exceed revenue, then meeting these costs can be negotiated with the SHBBVP. Individual sites may be required to create and manage a cost centre (or other auditable mechanism) to track NSVM revenue and expenditure. Revenue must be accounted for in accordance with government accounting policies and procedures.

4.3.7 Ordering and stocking the NSVM/NSDM

Due to the differing products to be vended/dispensed from either type of machine, and the revenue raised from NSVMs, the ordering procedure differs for NSVMs and NSDMs.

- NSVM

As detailed in [4.3.6 NSVM Revenue](#) within this document, revenue derived from the sale of products vended from the NSVM is to be used to purchase stock for the machine.

Currently the supplier for NSVM stock is ASP Healthcare.

NSP Coordinators, or delegated staff members should place orders in accordance with their site procurement policies and procedures. It is advised that both a standard type of pack (Fitpack®, Fitstick®) and one pack with additional equipment (Fitpack® Plus, Fitstick® Plus Pack 3, Fitstick® 5 Plus) are made available for clients accessing an NSVM. See [Appendix 1 – Product list](#) for packs available to order.

It is the responsibility of the NSP Coordinator, or delegated staff member to check the stock levels of the machine regularly, and re-stock the machine when necessary.

- NSDM

SHBBVP provides stock for NSDMs. When orders are required to be placed, fill out and send the following to nsp@health.wa.gov.au:

Organisation	
Attn	
Quantity	xx boxes of 100 (Fitstick® 5 pack DS -146)
Delivery Address	
Courier Company	
Courier Account Number	

It is the responsibility of the NSP Coordinator (or delegated staff member) to check the stock levels of the machine regularly, and re-stock the machine when necessary.

4.3.8 Service and maintenance

It is the responsibility of each individual site (as directed by the NSP Coordinator) to regularly perform basic servicing of the NSVM/NSDM including cleaning the exterior and interior of the machine. The NSVM/NSDM manual will explain how to perform basic servicing, and if required training can be provided to staff by the NSVM/NSDM manufacturer.

4.3.9 Malfunction of NSVM/NSDM

In the event of reported malfunction of the NSVM/NSDM, an 'out of order' notice and advice regarding other points of access to needles and syringes is to be attached to the machine.

If the NSVM/NSDM is out of order, needles and syringes are to be made available to clients at no cost from within the individual site. A notice advising this is to be attached to the machine. During this time the individual site can obtain injecting equipment at no cost from the SHBBVP to distribute to clients.

Similarly should a significant disaster event (e.g. a cyclone) impact on the provision of free needles and syringes, the service is to be maintained in accordance with individual site's policies and procedures for dealing with such events.

In the interest of staff safety, security personnel should respond to malfunctions, vandalism or other issues relating to the NSVM/NSDM (lost coins, out of stock etc). If security personnel are unavailable, no less than two staff should attend to the machine, acknowledging relevant site-specific Occupational Health and Safety policies.

To rectify NSVM/NSDM malfunctions individual site staff should follow steps as outlined in [Appendix 2 – In the event of a machine malfunction](#) of this document. In the event that the machine requires repair, the NSP Coordinator should contact the SHBBVP to discuss options.

4.3.10 Return of used needles and syringes

The provision of sterile needles and syringes via the NSVM/NSDM is not contingent upon the return of used needles and syringes. Most clients dispose of their injecting equipment correctly, using the disposal tubes and packs provided with the needles and syringes. Occasionally some clients may return used equipment, and in this instance individual site staff must direct clients to an appropriate means of disposal.

The SHBBVP recommends the installation and provision of community needle and syringe disposal units on site. The installation and servicing of these are the responsibility of the individual site. Any costs incurred are the responsibility of the individual site and should be paid through the revenue of the NSVM if applicable. If this cost exceeds the revenue, or if an NSDM is on site, then meeting installation costs may be negotiated with the SHBBVP.

4.3.11 Staff training and education

An operational manual will be provided before installation of the machine, outlining all functions and maintenance that should be conducted. A copy of the manual is to be kept with the NSP site guidelines document, and approval document. Training on how to operate and maintain the NSVM/NSDM can also be provided to individual site staff, upon discussion with the SHBBVP and Regional NSP Coordinator

For staff directly involved in operation and maintenance of the NSVM/NSDM it is expected they will undertake training in NSP provision as provided by the NSP Regional Coordinator/SHBBVP and/or other agencies. To obtain details of agencies that offer training in NSP provision, contact the SHBBVP and read about workforce development options on the [Sexual Health and blood-borne viruses – workforce development webpage](#).

Ideally, all individual site staff should be oriented about the NSVM/NSDM and read the information [available online as provided by the SHBBVP on NSP operation in WA](#).

Staff involved in the operation of the NSP should also complete the [online NSP Orientation and Training Package](#) (follow the links to register for free access to the Mental Health Commission learning management system).

4.3.12 Client education and referral

Signage will be developed in collaboration with the SHBBVP and must be placed on the front of the machine.

Appropriate signage will include instructions on:

- how to use the NSVM/NSDM
- local contact details of relevant support agencies and treatment services
- alternative local sources of sterile needles and syringes
- safe disposal of used needles and syringes.

All injecting equipment packs provided by the machine will also include health information and contact details of relevant referral services.

4.3.13 Client confidentiality

All Department of Health, Western Australia (DoHWA), employees are bound by the Department of Health WA [Code of Conduct](#) with regard to confidentiality. Staff at non-DoHWA services would be expected to respect client confidentiality as stated by the code of conduct or practice of their workplace. In any instance, all NSP staff, regardless of their position (administrative officers, health practitioners, pharmacists, volunteers etc.) are required to respect client confidentiality at all times.

5. Relevant Legislation

- [Medicines and Poisons Act 2014](#)
- [Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#)

6. Additional resources / supporting documents

[WACHS Policy: Needle and syringe program provision from WACHS Facilities](#)

[Guideline: Provision of needle and syringe programs \(NSP\) in Western Australia](#)

Guidelines Template for the Establishment and Operation of a Needle and Syringe Program (NSP)

7. Guideline Contact

Enquiries relating to this Guideline may be directed to:

Title: Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program (SHBBVP)

Directorate: Communicable Disease Control Directorate

Email: NSP@health.wa.gov.au

8. Document Control

Guideline number	Version	Published	Review Date	Amendments
0002	V.1.	08/11/2021	08/11/2026	Original version
0002	V.2.	01/02/2022	08/11/2026	Minor amendment including hyperlinks to Additional resources/supporting documents

9. Approval

Approved by	Dr Paul Armstrong, Director, Communicable Disease Control Directorate, Department of Health
Approval date	23 September 2021

10. Appendix 1 – Product list

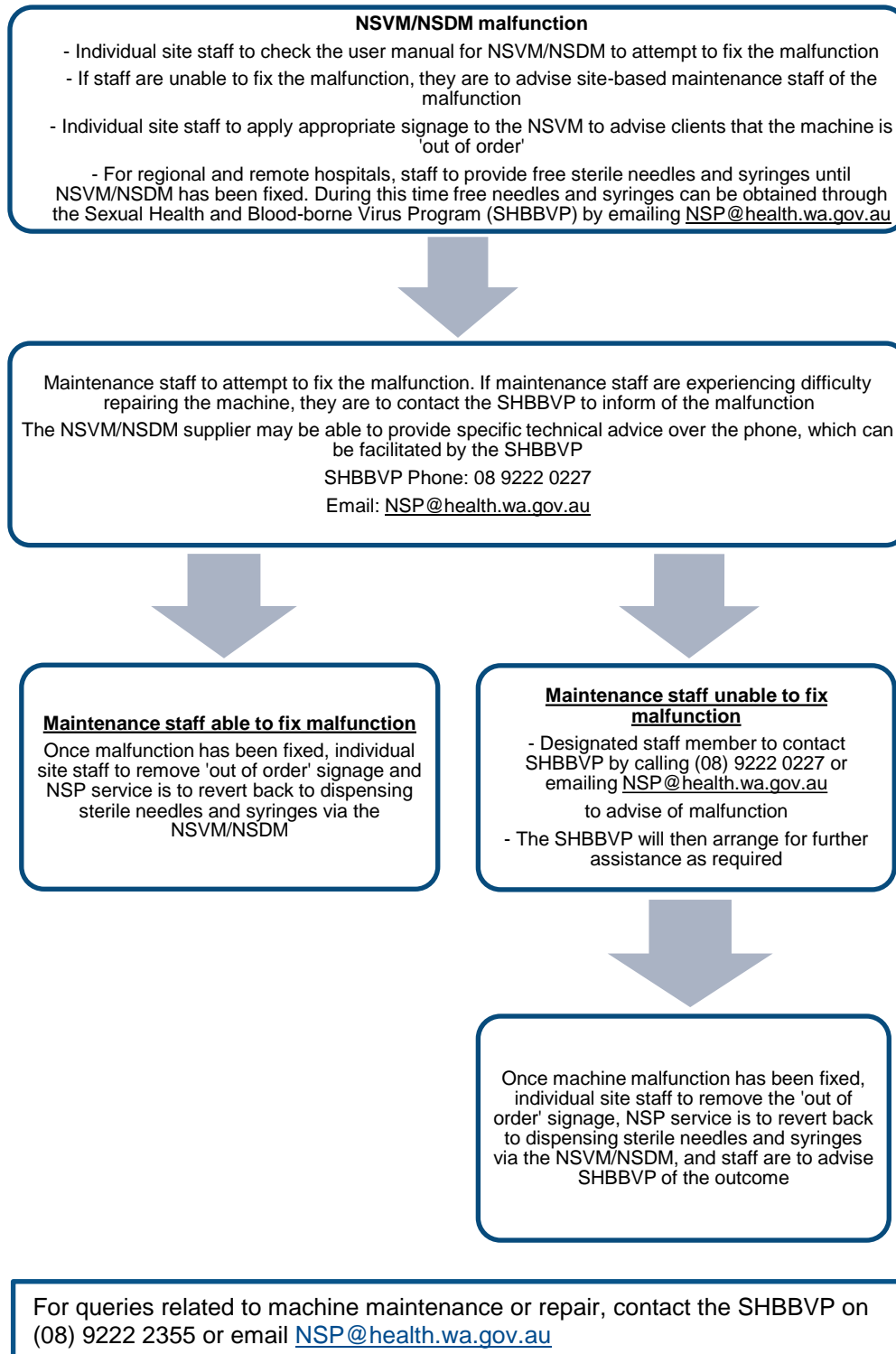
NSVM

ASP Product Code	Product Contents	Units per Carton	Recommended vend price
DS-007: FITPACK® 5	FITPACK® Container 5 BD - 29g 1ml Insulin Syringe x 5 units FITPACK® Container WA Label	100	Price per Unit: \$3.00
DS-043: FITPACK® PLUS	FITPACK® Container 3 BD - 29g 1ml Insulin Syringe x 3 units 5ml Water for Injection x 3 units Reynard Alcohol Swabs x 6 units ASP Plastic Spoons x 3 units FITPACK® Container WA FITPACK PLUS Label	100	Price per Unit: \$3.00
DS-147: FITSTICK® PLUS PACK 3	FITSTICK® CONTAINER x 3 units BD - 29g 1ml Insulin Syringe x 3 units 5ml Water for Injection x 3 units Reynard Alcohol Swabs x 6 units ASP Plastic Spoons x 3 units Single Cotton Balls x 3 units WHITE PAPER DOUBLE LINED BAG 20x20 BLACK PRINT FITSTICK 3 WA	100	Price per Unit: \$3.00
DS-148: FITSTICK® 5 PLUS	FITSTICK® CONTAINER x 5 units BD - 29g 1ml Insulin Syringe x 5 units Reynard Alcohol Swabs x 5 units Single Cotton Balls x 5 units WHITE PAPER DOUBLE LINED BAG 20x20 BLACK PRINT FITSTICK 5 WA	100	Price per Unit: \$3.00

NSDM

ASP Product Code	Product Contents	Units per Carton	Recommended vend price
DS-146: FITSTICK® 5	FITSTICK® CONTAINER x 5 units BD - 29g 1ml Insulin Syringe x 5 units FITSTICK - WA Label WHITE RESEALABLE BAG	100	Free dispense

11. Appendix 2 – In the event of a machine malfunction



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