

## Wyoming Department of Health and Wyoming Department of Corrections Partnership for Communicable Disease Prevention

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### **Project Area:**

The State of Wyoming, Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) Communicable Disease Unit, the Wyoming Department of Corrections (WDOC) five penal institutions; Wyoming State Penitentiary, Wyoming Medium Security Institution, Wyoming Honor Conservation Camp, Wyoming Honor Farm, and Wyoming Women's Center.

### **Project Description:**

The Wyoming State Department of Health Communicable Disease Section has made great strides over the last year to integrate and target our prevention and intervention activities for STD/HIV and viral hepatitis in collaboration with the Wyoming Department of Corrections (WDOC). Efforts are being directed to both increase awareness and educate prison staff members, target inmates for screening and referral once released back into the community as well as to provide Hepatitis A and B vaccines to all inmates that do not have documentation or prior vaccination.

The first of our efforts were directed towards WDOC prison staff members. We presented updated HIV and Viral Hepatitis information, as well as provided rapid HIV testing to those staff members interested at all five of the WDOC prisons.

The second tier of this collaboration is focused on the DOC offender's that are currently incarcerated in a Wyoming Prison. Safer Sex Kits were designed to be provided to the offender upon release from prison. The Safer Sex Kit contains: risk reduction materials, a list of participating clinics within Wyoming, as well as a two free STD/HIV testing vouchers (based off the statewide Knowyo.org platform). The voucher program was created for offenders in hopes of connecting them to their public health or family planning clinic in the community, and to give the releasing offender and their partner an opportunity to know their current STD/HIV status.

Lastly, the WDH Hepatitis Vaccine Program (HVP) has extended its efforts to vaccinate adults (19 years or older) against Hepatitis A and B to the Wyoming Department of Corrections offender population. All WDOC offenders will have the opportunity to be vaccinated with Hepatitis A and/or B vaccine.

### **Partners (Including Funders):**

Wyoming Department of Health STD/TB/Viral Hepatitis Program, HIV Prevention Program, Immunization Program, Breast and Cervical Cancer program, and the Colon/Rectal Screening Program, the Wyoming Department of Corrections and Corizon Healthcare, and GlaxoSmithKline.

### **Accomplishments:**

- Blood borne pathogens training, focused on HIV/Viral Hepatitis, was presented to prison staff at all five WDOC facilities and rapid HIV testing was available for employees after they received the presentation. Approximately 240 staff members were tested.

- Safer Sex Kit Program has been implemented in all five WDOC penal institutions, and one WDOC substance abuse treatment facility. Since September 2011, all of these facilities have been handing out Safer Sex Kits to releasing offenders, with a total of 369 kits in 2011. Staff also presents a communicable disease 101 presentations to offenders upon release, and during re-entry and pre-release classes.
- Staff members that are presenting the communicable disease 101 presentation have been trained, and received an instructor's manual with updated and correct information.
- All five WDOC penal institutions and one treatment facility have signed contracts with the Wyoming Department of Health Viral Hepatitis Program to provide Hepatitis A and B vaccine to all consenting offenders.
- Each facility's medical staff members attended an in depth working session to discuss Hepatitis in general, vaccine knowledge and scenarios, and come up with an action plan for implementing the Hepatitis Vaccine Program into their facility. The action plan consisted of a date when they would start the offender Hepatitis Vaccine Program and how they were going to educate the offenders on general information about viral hepatitis, and the vaccine is now available to offenders.
- By October 2011, all five WDOC facilities have implemented the Hepatitis Vaccine Program, with a total of 2161 (Hepatitis A, B and Twinrix) vaccination doses administered as of February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

#### Challenges:

- One of the biggest challenges we faced was the great amount of time and support it took to implement the programs. Activities that took the most time were getting the stakeholders on board, training all staff involved in the safer sex kit program, communicable disease 101 presentations, and viral hepatitis vaccine program, traveling to all of the facilities, making over 900 safer sex kits, developing databases to track progress, and helping to locate the immunization status of offenders in the Wyoming Immunization Registry.
- Lack of consistent communication with the Wyoming Department of Corrections and the contracted medical provider.
- Turn over in prison health care staff and competing priorities for the individuals playing a key role in implementing these programs.
- Low public health knowledge of the individuals within the WDOC facilities implementing the communicable disease 101 presentations, such as case managers, property staff, correctional officers, private contract medical providers, and administration staff.

#### Lessons Learned:

- It was important to allow enough time to educate on basic public health practices in prisons and the implications for the community.
- The response time for our request towards the Department of Corrections, contracted medical provider, and each individual facility took longer than expected, being flexible was imperative.
- Taking time to understand the relationship, and communication styles of the Wyoming Department of Corrections, and Corizon Healthcare staff took time to adjust to.

- In the future, have one centralized location for training, and working group sessions rather than going to each individual facility. This would be less time consuming, increase collaboration with each facility, and create more discussion.
- Including the Wyoming Department of Correction leadership and director from the beginning was extremely beneficial for getting the other stakeholders on board.
- It was beneficial and effective to bring a trainer with the same professional background as the Corizon Healthcare staff for training.

**Recommendations:**

- Learn about the Department of Correction and facility operations first and foremost, and include all stakeholders during initial conversations and planning.
- Understand the inner workings of the medical units within the facilities, identify if the medical providers are under contract, and understand how these systems function together within the Department of Corrections.
- Be FLEXIBLE and allow time to cultivate working relationships.
- Be responsive to concerns at all levels.

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