



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

1730 K Street, N.W., Suite 815

Washington, D.C. 20006

(202) 254-5125 FAX 254-3060 TDD 254-3816

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Statement by the National Commission On AIDS
Concerning GAO Report on Needle Exchange

The Commission is pleased with the conclusions of the GAO report released today. It is consistent with the Commission's own findings that needle exchange programs do not lead to more drug use, and they do result in behavior change likely to lead to reduced transmission of HIV. More than one-third of all adult and adolescent AIDS cases are related to IV drug use.

Don C. Des Jarlais, Ph.D., a member of the Commission who is an authority on HIV prevention among drug users, said, "Syringe exchange programs are utilized throughout the world to prevent HIV infection among injecting drug users. Hopefully the GAO report will help us move towards the Commission's recommendations of making drug abuse treatment available immediately to all who apply, and to provide legal access to sterile injection equipment. The report should help remove opposition to properly designed, community-based needle exchange programs."

The GAO study was done at the request of Rep. Charles Rangel, who asked GAO to review the data and recommendations* in the July, 1991 report by the National Commission On AIDS, entitled "The Twin Epidemics of Substance Use and HIV."

The GAO report is a comprehensive review of the national and international data on syringe exchange programs. The Commission applauds the scientific vigor which the GAO applied to this process, and we also note that the new data that has evolved since the Commission's report sustain's our original conclusions.

* A copy of the report's five recommendations and executive summary is included.

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