New Mexico Needle Exchange Program Fights HIV Among Drug Users

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New Mexico AIDS Services is targeting intravenous drug users through its needle-exchange program, which has effectively provided clean injecting equipment to the at-risk community for the past three years, Farmington, New Mexico newspaper *The Daily Times* reports. The program launched through the state's Harm Reduction Act of 1996.

People enrolled in the program receive an ID card that allows them to carry needles legally, said Mark Lewis, rural case manager with the Farmington branch of New Mexico AIDS Services. In addition, the article notes, police officers are unable to charge card-carriers with possession of drug paraphernalia.

According to New Mexico AIDS Services, it can cost more than $10,000 a year per person to treat HIV/AIDS and more than $30,000 to treat Hepatitis C. However, providing new syringes only costs $200 per year for the average member.

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