

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Lauds U.S. Drug Czar's Opposition to Needle Exchange Programs

Gov. Christie Whitman today applauded the efforts of U.S. Drug Policy Chief Barry McCaffrey for his role in convincing the Clinton administration to continue to deny federal funds to be used for needle exchange programs for drug addicts as a way to prevent AIDS.

"I strongly concur with the opinion of the national drug chief that needle exchange programs send the wrong message to our children by condoning illegal drug use," said Gov. Whitman. "Needle exchange programs are contrary to our efforts to reduce illegal drug use and drug-related crimes."

The Governor said that her opposition to needle exchange programs is supported by the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, which adopted a resolution stating its opposition. The council's resolution states that needle exchange programs "enable addictive behavior, facilitate death by drug overdose, and send a clear message to our society that law enforcement efforts against illegal drug use are to be ignored." Gov. Whitman and the Council support substance abuse prevention and treatment as more effective strategies to reduce AIDS transmission by intravenous drug users.

Gov. Whitman also noted that the America Family Association of New Jersey has advised her of a study in Vancouver, Canada which "showed that when their needle exchange program started in 1988, AIDS prevalence among IV (intravenous) drug addicts was only 1-2%, now it is 27%." The association also cited to the Governor a Montreal study which showed that IV addicts who used the needle exchange program were more than twice as likely to become infected with HIV as IV addicts who did not use the program."

"I have to believe that the message kids would take from a program that supplies free needles to drug addicts to inject themselves with illegal drugs is that drug use is acceptable, said Gov. Whitman. " We are all alarmed by the rise in drug use by our young people. Sending the wrong message about drugs to kids is dangerous and I will continue to oppose the legalization of needle exchange programs in New Jersey."