

Condom Machine Distribution

Introduction:

In 1989, FAP began distributing condoms to prisoners in the San Francisco county jails. This distribution program was the result of a combined effort of the San Francisco Sheriff's Department and the Forensic AIDS Project, a program of Jail Health Services. In 1989, FAP was the first program in California to distribute condoms in a correctional facility and nationally, one of six such institutions. Today, FAP is still one of only a handful of such institutions distributing condoms.

Background: In 2006, after more than 15 years of distributing condoms employing a one-to-one counseling model between FAP health educators and prisoners, FAP stood back to look at how we might increase condom distribution. This caused us to realize two things: one, that condom distribution varied depending upon comfort level with the counselor available to distribute condoms, and two, we were asking our counselors to deliver a very complex message – having sex in jail is illegal, but, if you do have sex in a jail, please use a condom, keeping in mind that an open condom can be confiscated and could result in a rule violation charge.

At this time, Mary Sylla from the Center for Health Justice approached us with a suggestion that we pilot the use of a condom machine in the jail. We embarked upon this project with approximately \$10,000 in research funding which Mary secured from the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (CAPS) and pr. We approached San Francisco's Sheriff, Michael Hennessey, who agreed to this pilot/research effort and suggested that we install the machine (which dispenses one condom at a time, free of charge), in the gym at the Hall of Justice where approximately 800 men exercise at least once a week. We posted condom distribution rules in three languages (attached). Prisoners and staff were interviewed pre and post-condom machine to evaluate changes in beliefs and to identify barriers to use of the machine.

Research Questions

- What is the feasibility of distributing condoms to prisoners using a condom machine?
- Does increased availability of condoms result in increased disciplinary issues?
- Does increased condom access result in increased sexual behavior in the jails?

Research Conclusions

Prisoners will take condoms from a public machine; less stigma than expected
Program increased prisoner and staff awareness of condom availability
No evidence that this novel condom access program increased sex in the jails
Staff post-intervention interviews indicate that discipline was not a problem
Program did not resolve the “wrong message” issue; some staff continued to
opposed access despite successful program

This project is further described in a four page CAPS handout (attached).

Proposal

The San Francisco Sheriff's Department has agreed to expand condom machine access to the jail facilities at San Bruno where an additional 800 men are housed. Each housing unit is a distinct unit with its own gym and medical clinic. There is no common area at San Bruno like the gymnasium at the Hall of Justice. Therefore, to install machines will require installation of a machine in each of the housing units. There are 16 housing units and the Sheriff's Department would like us to include one machine where prisoners receive their property when they are being released from custody resulting in the need for 17 machines total.

The Center for Health Justice will make available to us eight machines at no cost. We will need to purchase an additional nine machines at a cost of \$200 per machine. Jail Health Services will pay for condoms on an on-going basis and FAP will assign staff to check the machines and stock them regularly.

***Projected Outcomes**

- Increased access to condoms for prisoners in and being released from the San Francisco County Jails
- Reduced self-reported HIV/STD risk behavior by prisoners in and being released from San Francisco County Jails.
- Increased awareness among correctional administrators, policy-makers and the community at large about the feasibility and impact of increased prisoner access to condoms.
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Budget

9 machines at \$200 per machine for a total cost of: \$1,800.

*Note: We will be seeking funding to pay for an evaluation, at the direction of the Center for Health Justice, of the above named outcomes.

Timeline

Month	Action	Comments
Month 1	Meet with Sheriff to solidify condom machine project Explore funding for condom machine evaluation	
Month 2	Order machines Meet with SFSD staff and with prisoners in all living units to present new program	
Month 3	Stock machines and begin monitoring use	

Condom Evaluation

The Center for Health Justice is interested in evaluating this more wide-spread condom machine distribution effort. We met with CAPS researcher Megan Comfort and agreed that inasmuch as it would take as much as one and a half years to actually secure funding for evaluation, we would like to explore