

Dried Blood Spot Testing in Harm Reduction Programs

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Background

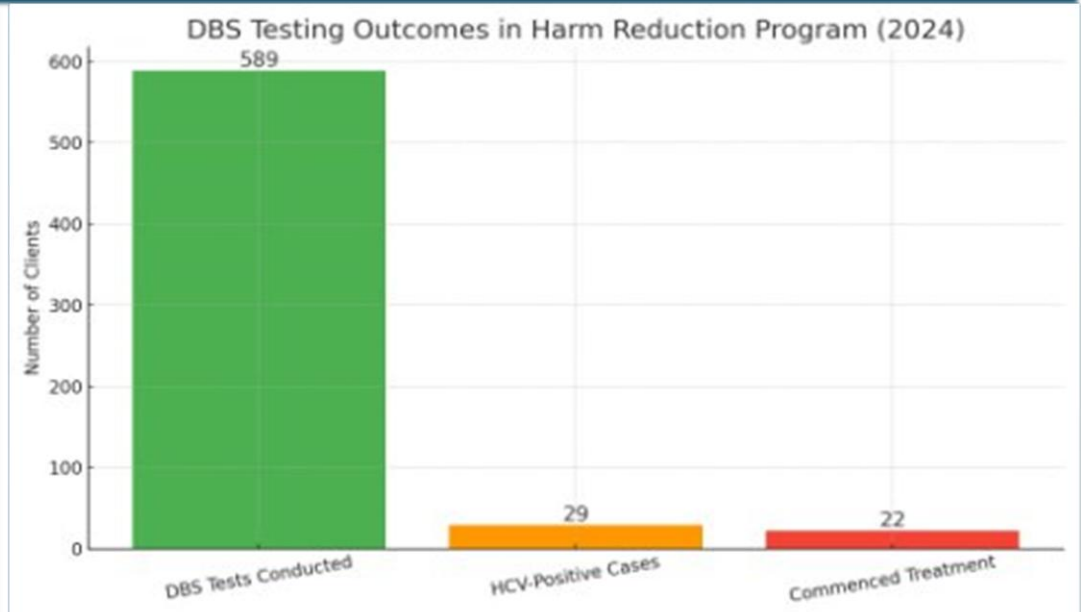
Hepatitis C (HCV) and HIV testing traditionally require venous blood samples, which can be challenging in harm reduction settings such as Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs). Many people who inject drugs (PWID) experience poor venous access, discouraging testing and limiting early diagnosis opportunities.

Method

In 2024, as part of a NSW Health initiative, SLHD Harm Reduction Program introduced dried blood spot (DBS) testing. Staff were trained and clients educated via materials and NSP fit packs. A \$20 Coles voucher was provided as incentive. Clients testing HCV-positive received follow-up care from a CNC and RN. Data collected included uptake, feedback, and treatment initiation.

RESULTS

- 589 DBS tests conducted
- 29 HCV-positive cases identified
- 22 commenced treatment
- DBS testing was well accepted as a simple, non-invasive alternative



Conclusion

DBS testing increased HCV screening uptake among PWID, demonstrating reliability and accessibility in NSP and OST clinic settings. The approach supports early diagnosis and treatment among underserved populations.

