

Fifteen years of breaking barriers into care for people leaving prison: a review of NSW Persons in Custody HIV Community Referral Program (PiCs)

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Background/Purpose:

JH&FMHN provide health care to People Living with HIV (PLWH) in 38 NSW correctional centres. Discharge involves referring PLWH to post-release treatment and care in one of the 42 community teams and sexual health clinics across NSW. Referrals are facilitated by PiCs, a collaborative project set up by Adahps and JH&FMHN.

Approach:

Upon release from custody, PLWH are asked to consent to a referral for the PiCs program, to ensure transition from Justice Health NSW to community care. Demographic data and envisaged post-release location data are collected upon referral; ad hoc reviews of care adherence are conducted.

Outcomes/Impact:

People were referred to PiCs between October 2011 and 20 April 2026. A total of 617 referrals were made via the PiCs program for 289 unique clients. Most referrals were to LHD community teams or sexual health services in Sydney, Newcastle, and the Illawarra areas. JH&FMHN report <5 people per year decline a referral into PiCs program.

Majority of PiCs referrals were to PLWH who were male (91%); 7% were for female and 2% identified as transgender. 17% of referrals were for people who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Many PiCs clients experience treatment interruptions within the first year post-release. A recent PiCs planning meeting suggested changes to refine the project, including a system to flag referrals for people who have high needs.

Innovation and Significance:

There are many psychosocial challenges, poor determinants of health and comorbidities faced by the PiCs client group. The PiCs program provides support for PLWH across LHDs, aiming to break down barriers to care. With the upcoming introduction of Single Patient Digital Record, there may be opportunities to enhance coordination between JH&FMHN correctional centre clinics and community HIV treatment services across NSW.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None