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| **Fine debt as a social determinant of health** |
| **Setting/problem**Three million fines are issued in New South Wales (NSW) every year. For people with complex issues and multiple needs; such as homelessness, poor mental and physical health and low income, receiving a fine can have a detrimental impact on their health and well-being. In Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD) there is nearly $100M worth of unpaid fines; with approximately $17M from one of western Sydney’s most disadvantaged postcodes. This area is home to the highest amount of fine debt in NSW.Consequences for ignoring fines in NSW include: enforcement order fees; driver’s license suspension; car registration cancellation; garnishing orders and seizure of personal property. This can lead to further offending and imprisonment. Other impacts can include housing insecurity, stability of family relationships, unemployment, ability to get to medical services, ability to service other debt and poor mental health.**Intervention**In partnership with Legal Aid NSW, WSLHD Health Promotion service implemented strategies to increase the number of WSLHD health units offering the NSW Work and Development Order (WDO) Scheme. This scheme administered by Revenue NSW allows eligible patients/clients to reduce NSW fine debt through needed medical treatment or life skills programs. WSLHD currently has 24 health units engaged in the scheme such as Mental Health, Drug Health, Social Work and Youth Health, who now screen patients for fine debt. Health Promotion also offers the scheme to families participating in the 10-week healthy lifestyle program, Go4Fun. Through this program, eligible parents can reduce their fine debt by up to $1000 and have their driver’s license reinstated providing an incentive for the family to complete the program**Outcomes**There has been a 67% increase in WSLHD WDO sponsors, the most active of all NSW Local Health Districts; approving 1,604 WDOs with a fine debt value of $8,531,248.37 for the most disadvantaged Western Sydney residents. This is the highest amount of fine debt reduced across the State.**Implications**Fine debt can cause health problems and conversely health problems can result in fine debt. By offering WDOs, we are creating an opportunity to improve the mental health and self-esteem of clients; as well as breaking the cycle of fine debt, engaging clients and providing a service that may really make a difference to their lives.**Preferred presentation format**Presentation |