Justice Health and
Forensic Mental Health Network

Justice Health NSW Policy

Sterilisation and Disinfection

Issue Date: 04 December 2025

Together for
Healthier Tomorrows

Sterilisation and Disinfection

Policy Number 5.018

Policy Function Safe Practice and Environment

Issue Date 04 December 2025

Next Review Date 04 December 2028

Risk Rating High

Summary This policy provides information which enable Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network staff to comply with the legislation and standards that describe the management of reprocessing (disinfection and sterilisation) reusable medical items and equipment.

Responsible Officer General Manager, Population and Preventative Health

Applies to
- ☐ Administration Centres
- ☐ Community Sites and programs
- ☒ Health Centres - Adult Correctional Centres or Police Cells
- ☒ Health Centres - Youth Justice Centres
- ☒ Long Bay Hospital
- ☒ Forensic Hospital

CM Reference POLJH/5018

Change summary
- Minor update
- Inclusion of reference to new Aust/NZ Standard 5369:2023

Authorised by Chair, Policy Steering Committee

Revision History

#	Issue Date	Number and Name	Change Summary
5	Dec 25	5.018 Sterilisation and Disinfection	Minor update Inclusion of reference to new Aust/NZ Standard 5369:2023
4	Jun 22	5.018 Sterilisation and Disinfection	Updated position titles. Updated incident management system. Updated reference to Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (the etwork). Updated to reflect Youth Justice name change.
3	Nov 18	5.018 Sterilisation and Disinfection	Updated relevant NSW Ministry of Health Policy Directives. Updated position titles.

2	Nov 11	5.018 Sterilisation and Disinfection	Minor updates including formatting. Requirements for TRIM of certain sterilisation or disinfecting documents need to be included.
1	May 15	5.018 Sterilisation and Disinfection	Minor amendments for clarification. Reference to IIMS. Minor update on 6 September 2016 to update *Clinical Nurse Consultant Infection Prevention* title to *Clinical Nurse Consultant Infection Prevention & Communicable Diseases*.

PRINT WARNING

Printed copies of this document, or parts thereof, must not be relied on as a current reference document.

Always refer to the electronic copy for the latest version.

Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network

PO BOX 150 Matraville NSW 2036

Tel (02) 9700 3000

http://www.justicehealth.nsw.gov.au

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1. Preface

Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (Justice Health NSW) is committed to providing facilities, equipment, procedures and training to enable Justice Health NSW staff to comply with the legislation and standards that describe the management of reprocessing (disinfection and sterilisation) of reusable medical items and equipment.

2. Policy Content

2.1 Mandatory Requirements

This policy applies to all instruments, dressings and intravascular devices – whether sterilised on-site or purchased sterile – that are classified as 'critical', that is, 'any equipment that enters sterile tissue or is capable of entering sterile tissue, or enters tissue that would be sterile under normal circumstances, or enters the vascular system' according to NSW Ministry of Health (the Ministry) PD2023_025 Infection Prevention and Control in Health Care Settings.

This policy also applies to all items, whether disinfected on-site or purchased that are classified as 'semi- critical' by the Ministry, that is, 'any equipment that comes into contact with a patient's mucous membranes or non-intact skin'.

This policy applies to Justice Health NSW staff who order, use, handle, store, discard, reprocess, or maintain the associated environments for critical items and semi-critical items, whether employed by the Justice Health NSW, contracted, agency staff or another category.

Only Justice Health NSW staff authorised and trained to reprocess reusable items and equipment should do so. Currently this involves the Justice Health NSW Oral Health staff who participate in an annual competency assessment. Nursing and medical staff must not request Oral Health staff to reprocess any items.

Justice Health NSW staff are not permitted to bring their own instruments or instruments from other healthcare facilities or organisations into the Network.

Justice Health NSW does not permit reusable items and equipment to be sent off-site (for example to a local public hospital) for reprocessing.

2.2 Implementation – Roles & Responsibilities

2.2.1 Chief Executive

- Must provide managers with the resources to support compliance with this policy and its associated procedures.

2.2.2 General Manager Population and Preventative health

- Must review all reported incidents of non-compliance with this policy.
- To ensure compliance with the minimum standards in the processing of items that required to be clean, disinfected or sterile the General Manager Population and Preventative Health must inform owners of facilities of the requirement to provide facilities with furnishings and workflows that comply with AS/NZ 5369:2023 *Australian New Zealand Standard Reprocessing of reusable medical devices and other devices in health and non health related facilities.*

2.2.3 Managers

- Must ensure compliance with this policy and its associated procedures.
- Must bring this policy and its associated procedures to the attention of all Justice Health NSW staff who use, handle, store, discard, or reprocess critical items and semi-critical items, or maintain the associated environments.
- Must ensure that sterilisation of critical items and disinfection of semi-critical items is undertaken only by Justice Health NSW staff authorised by this policy to reprocess those items.

2.2.4 Clinical Nurse Consultant Infection Prevention & Communicable Diseases

- Must provide support and advice to all Justice Health NSW staff for the implementation of this policy.

2.2.5 Justice Health NSW staff

- Must comply with this policy and its associated procedures.

3. Definitions

Must

Indicates a mandatory action to be complied with.

Should

Indicates a recommended action to be complied with unless there are sound reasons for taking a different course of action.

4. Procedure Content

4.1 Facilities for Sterile and Disinfected Items

The Australasian Health Facility Guidelines and AS/NZ 5369:2023 describe the furnishings and workflow that prevent contamination between used, clean and sterile/disinfected items. Reusable instruments must be sorted, cleaned, dried, packaged, sterilised, cooled and stored in designated areas that comply with AS/NZ 5369:2023 and the current version of the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines. Semi-critical items must be sorted, cleaned, dried, disinfected and stored in designated areas that comply with AS/NZ 5369:2023 and the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines.

Facility owners (Corrective Services NSW, Youth Justice NSW, Justice Health NSW and private operators) must be informed that the configuration of the 'Sterilising Room' for all Oral Health Clinics must comply with the descriptions in AS/NZ 5369:2023 and the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines. Sign-off on plans for these facilities must include the Clinical Director Oral Health and Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) Infection Prevention & Communicable Diseases.

The facility owners must be informed that areas for receipt and/or storage of sterile/disinfected items must be provided in accordance with AS/NZ 5369:2023 and the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines. Managers must submit a Capital Works submission to address any deficit

in the facilities that are under their control, to obtain the furnishings and workflows that comply with AS/NZ 5369:2023 and the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines.

The associated environments for storage of all sterile or disinfected items and for reprocessing of reusable critical and semi-critical items, must be maintained to the standard described in AS/NZ 5369:2023.

4.1.1 Single Use and Single Patient Use Devices

Single use devices must be used once. Single use items may be labelled as 'single use', 'disposable' or display the symbol ②.

Items labelled 'single patient use' must be used for only one patient.

4.1.2 Items not Authorised for Sterilisation or Disinfection in Justice Health NSW

Items not authorised under AS/NZ 5369:2023 must not be reprocessed in Justice Health NSW.

Manufacturer's instructions must be followed when reprocessing reusable instruments and equipment, unless those instructions contravene AS/NZ 5369:2023 and the Ministry policy. If Justice Health NSW staff detect that the manufacturer's instructions contravene AS/NZ 5369:2023 and/or the Ministry policy as described in this policy, the CNC Infection Prevention & Communicable Diseases must be notified, a brief must be submitted via the Service Director Population Health to the Chief Executive, and a written report must be sent to the manufacturer and to the Therapeutic Goods Authority via the Incident Report Investigation Scheme.

4.1.3 Sterilisation of Reusable Items

Reusable critical instruments must be cleaned, packaged and sterilised, and remain sterile until the next use, as described in AS/NZ 5369:2023.

4.1.4 Sterilising Equipment

Sterilisers, ancillary equipment and consumables for sterilisation must be evaluated and reviewed by JH Justice Health NSW staff.

Only Class B pre-vacuum small steam sterilisers that are on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods must be used in the Network.

Sterilisers must be installed, commissioned, tested and maintained as specified in AS/NZ 5369:2023.

Nominated Oral Health staff are responsible for coordinating the annual preventative maintenance program and any required repairs for the sterilisers with a qualified technician who must submit a report to the Manager Oral Health stating whether or not the steriliser is functioning in compliance with AS/NZ 5369:2023. Any non-compliant steriliser must be 'tagged' and must not be used until it has been repaired, re-tested and meets AS/NZ 5369:2023.

4.1.5 Authority to use a Steriliser

Sterilisers must only be used and operated by appropriately trained Oral Health staff who participate in the annual competency assessment. 'Use' includes loading and/or setting the program and/or unloading the steriliser.

4.1.6 Sterilisation Monitoring and Documentation

To ensure compliance with AS/NZ 5369:2023, the sterilisation process must be validated annually and every sterilisation cycle must be monitored and recorded by Oral Health staff to authorise the release of the sterile instruments. Oral Health staff must maintain a sterilisation log for each steriliser in the Sterilising Room in every Oral Health Clinic. All documentation relating to sterilising cycles must be entered in Content Manager by Oral Health Administration Officers.

In accordance with the State Records Authority of New South Wales General Retention and Disposal Authority (Public Health Services: Patient/Client Records), records relating to the sterilisation of surgical instruments and equipment used in procedures must be retained for the following periods:

1. Sterilisation printouts – retain for a minimum of 15 years after date of printout, then destroy; and
2. Log books / sterilisation register used to keep a record of a steriliser's performance – retain for a minimum of 15 years after last entry, then destroy.

4.1.7 Handling and Storage of Sterile Stock

All sterile stock, reusable and single use, whether processed on-site or commercially processed, must be transported, handled and stored (including shelf life and stock rotation), at every step from receipt through until use, to maintain the integrity of the pack and thus protect the contents from contamination.

4.1.8 Deviations and Incidents

Deviations and incidents involving sterile items must be detected, investigated, documented, reported and addressed as required by AS/NZ 5369:2023 and the Ministry.

If a sterile item (reusable or single use, reprocessed on-site or purchased sterile) is suspected of being unsterile, it must not be used.

Any deviations or events detected by Oral Health staff in any part of the sterilisation process must be reported to the Manager Oral Health and Clinical Director Oral Health and managed on the incident management system (ims+).

Deviations in the standard of sterile items that are detected by other Justice Health NSW staff (e.g. nurses, doctors) before the item is used on a patient must be reported and managed on ims+.

An instrument that has been sterilised in the Justice Health NSW and released without appropriate documentation is considered an incident even if not used on a patient and must be reported on ims+ and managed by the Manger Oral Health, Clinical Director Oral Health and reviewed by the CNC Infection Prevention & Communicable Diseases. The incident must be reported via line managers to the General Manager Population and Preventative Health.

Any incident involving the use on a patient of a compromised sterile item reusable or single use, processed on-site or purchased sterile must be reported on ims+ as a clinical incident and managed by the line manager and reviewed by the CNC Infection Prevention & Communicable Diseases. A report of the incident and investigation results must be provided to the Service Director Population Health, the General Manager Population and Preventative Health and the Chief Executive.

A tracking system must be used to document the reprocessing of every reusable item to facilitate any possible look-back. If the risk assessment indicates that a 'look back' is required, the investigation must be conducted as described in the NSW PD2023_003 *Lookback Policy*. Nominated Oral Health staff must audit the documentation in each Oral Health Clinic at least once a year and table the report and audits at the Oral Health meetings

4.1.9 Recall of Non-sterile Stock

Non-conforming sterile stock (whether reusable or single use; processed on-site or commercially processed) must be recalled and documented as described in 3.3 Recall of Non-sterile Stock in the Justice Health NSW Sterilisation Manual.

Recalls generated by a manufacturer/distributor or the Ministry must be coordinated by the Nurse Manager Clinical Resources and Governance Unit.

Recalls of instruments reprocessed in the Justice Health NSW must be coordinated and managed by the Clinical Director Oral Health and reported at the Oral Health meeting and Governance Unit.

4.1.10 Purchase of Critical Items

Justice Health NSW staff with the delegated authority to order supplies must, before purchasing reusable instruments, consider the cleaning, disinfection or sterilisation and storage requirements of that item to ensure that it can be safely reprocessed in the Network.

Justice Health NSW staff with the delegated authority to order supplies must, before purchasing single-use critical items such as wound dressings, intravascular equipment and single-use items and equipment, must consider the storage and handling requirements to ensure the integrity of the items is not compromised.

4.1.11 Training and Assessment of Competency in Sterilisation

Oral Health Service managers must only employ Dental Assistants who hold or are undertaking a *Dental Assistants Certificate III or IV*.

Oral Health Service staff must attend the *Network Introduction to Sterilisation of Instruments Workshop* before they package instruments and/or load and/or use and/or unload a steriliser and must participate in the annual competency assessment.

An annual self-report survey (AS/NZ 5369:2023 *risk assessment for compliance*) is used to assess sterilisation competency and currency. The Lead Dental Assistant will collate and report survey results to the Manager Oral Health and Clinical Director Oral Health.

4.2 Disinfection of Semi-critical Reusable Items

4.2.1 Purchase of Semi-critical Items

Preference must routinely be given to the purchase of single-use semi-critical items, to avoid the risks associated with the chemical disinfection of reusable semi-critical items.

4.2.2 Equipment and Chemicals for Disinfection

Reusable semi-critical items must be cleaned and disinfected as described in AS/NZ 5369:2023 and NSW PD2023_025 *Infection Prevention and Control in Healthcare Settings*. Justice Health NSW staff must not follow disinfection advice that is contrary to the Ministry policy. If a manufacturer's recommended disinfecting process does not

comply with the Ministry policy, or is not available in the Network, then a semi-critical reusable item may be cleaned and sterilised on-site if the manufacturer's instructions state that the semi-critical re-usable item can be steam sterilised.

Only chemicals and disinfection equipment approved by the Equipment, Products and Imprest Committee can be used for the disinfection of reusable semi-critical items.

Thermal disinfection equipment must not be used in the Network because the ancillary requirements for that process are not available in the Network.

4.2.3 Authority to use Disinfection Equipment Chemicals

Reusable semi-critical items must be used, cleaned and disinfected using approved equipment and procedures. Disinfection chemicals must not be used for any purpose or in any manner not described in those procedures.

4.2.4 Handling and Storage of Disinfected Items

All semi-critical items, whether reprocessed on-site or purchased ready to use, must be transported, handled and stored (including shelf life and stock rotation), at every step from receipt through until use, to maintain the integrity of the pack and thus protect the contents from contamination.

4.2.5 Deviations and Incidents with Disinfected Items

Deviations in any part of an on-site disinfection process, detected before or after the item was used on a patient, must be reported to the Lead Dental Assistant and Manager Oral Health, and the incident must also be reported and managed on ims+.

Any incident involving the use on a patient of a contaminated semi-critical item must be reported on ims+ as a clinical incident and managed by the line manager and reviewed by the CNC Infection Prevention & Communicable Diseases. A report of the incident and investigation results must be provided to the Service Director Population Health, General Manager Population and Preventive Health and the Chief Executive.

The use of an on-site disinfecting process other than those approved must be reported on ims+ as a clinical incident and managed by the line manager and reviewed by the CNC Infection Prevention & Communicable Diseases. A report of the incident and investigation results must be provided to the Service Director Population Health, General Manager Population and Preventive Health and the Chief Executive.

4.2.6 Recall of Non-disinfected Items

Non-conforming disinfected items, whether reusable or single use, processed on-site or commercially processed, must be recalled and documented.

Recalls generated by a manufacturer/distributor or the Ministry must be coordinated by the Nurse Manager Clinical Resources and the Governance Unit.

Recalls of items disinfected in the Justice Health NSW must be coordinated by the Service Director Population Health.

4.2.7 Training and Assessment of Competency in Disinfection

Oral Health Service managers must only employ Dental Assistants who hold or are undertaking a *Dental Assistants Certificate III or IV*.

Oral Health Service staff must attend the Justice Health NSW *Introduction to Sterilisation of Instruments Workshop* before they package instruments and/or load and/or use and/or unload a steriliser and must participate in the annual competency assessment.

An annual self-report survey (AS/NZ 5369:2023 *risk assessment for compliance*) is used to assess sterilisation competency and currency. The Lead Dental Assistant will collate and report survey results to the Manager Oral Health and Clinical Director Oral Health.

5. Related Documents

Legislations	*None*
Justice Health NSW Policies, Guidelines and Procedures	*None*
Justice Health NSW Forms	*None*
NSW Health Policy Directives and Guidelines	Australian Health Facility Guidelines PD2023_003 *Lookback Policy* PD2023_025 *Infection Prevention and Control in Healthcare Settings*
Other documents and resources	Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care: *AS 5369:2023 Reprocessing of reusable medical devices and other devices in health and non health related facilities.* Clinical Excellence Commission: *Reprocessing of Reusable Medical Devices*