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Syringe Services Programs (SSPs)



Syringe Services Programs



Public Health
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KEY POINTS

- Syringe services programs are community prevention programs that provide a range of services that prevent spread of disease and protect communities.
- They are proven to save lives, help those with substance use disorders get needed support, prevent overdose deaths, and reduce the impact of drug use on the community.



What it is



A syringe services program (or SSP) in action.

Syringe services programs (SSPs) are community-based prevention programs that provide a range of services. These services include:

- Links to substance use disorder treatment
- Access to and disposal of sterile syringes and injection equipment
- Vaccination

- Testing
- Links to care and treatment for infectious diseases

SSPs protect the public and first responders by providing safe disposal of used needles and syringes. SSPs also prevent outbreaks of other diseases by providing:

- Testing
- Counseling
- Sterile injection supplies

Nearly thirty years of research show that comprehensive SSPs are:

- Safe and effective
- Cost-saving
- Not increasing illegal drug use or crime
- Reducing spread of viral hepatitis, HIV, and other infections

Why it matters



A man receives aid from syringe services program workers.

The majority of new hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections are due to injection drug use. Reports of HCV cases rose 3.5-fold from 2010 to 2016. [\[1\]](#) Additionally, more than 2,500 new human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections each year are due to people who inject drugs. [\[2\]](#)

The best way to prevent the spread of these diseases for people who inject drugs is to stop injecting them. If that is not possible, use sterile injection equipment for each injection to reduce the risk of infection and prevent outbreaks.

SSPs are associated with an estimated 50% reduction in HIV and HCV infections. Transmission is reduced by over two-thirds [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) when combined with medications that treat opioid dependence (also known as medication-assisted treatment).

SSPs act as a bridge to other health services, including HCV and HIV testing and treatment and medication-assisted treatment. [\[5\]](#)

Outcomes

Most SSPs offer referrals to medication-assisted treatment. [\[6\]](#) New SSP users are five times more likely to enter drug treatment. They are also three times more likely to stop using drugs than those who don't use the program.

SSPs prevent overdose deaths by teaching people who inject drugs:

- How to recognize and prevent overdose
- How to recognize, respond to, and reverse overdose
- How to use naloxone, a medication that reverses overdose

Many SSPs provide "overdose prevention kits" that contain naloxone to people who inject drugs. [\[7\]](#) [\[8\]](#) [\[9\]](#) [\[10\]](#) [\[11\]](#) [\[12\]](#)

Strategies

SSPs partner with local law enforcement and provide them with naloxone. This helps local police departments respond to and prevent death when someone has overdosed. [\[13\]](#)

SSPs also protect first responders and the public by providing safe needle disposal. This reduces the amount of discarded needles in the community. [\[14\]](#) [\[15\]](#) [\[16\]](#) [\[17\]](#) [\[18\]](#) [\[19\]](#)

A 2015 study by the CDC's National HIV Behavioral Surveillance System found how SSPs' clean needle programs help communities. The more syringes distributed per the number of people who inject drugs, the more likely used syringes would be disposed of safely. [\[20\]](#)

However, studies in Baltimore [\[21\]](#) and New York City [\[22\]](#) found that crime rates did not change if an area had SSPs or not.

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention](#)

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