New Needle Exchanges Set to Open in Ohio and Northern Kentucky

The programs hope to counter a recent spike in HIV and hepatitis C cases linked to injection drug use.

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Needle exchange programs are opening in Ohio and northern Kentucky in an effort to stem the rise in HIV and hepatitis C cases resulting from injection drug use, reports Cincinatti.com, part of the USA Today network.

Specifically, a Hamilton County Exchange Project medical vehicle will be in operation from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Thursday at the Mercy Health Clermont Hospital campus in Batavia, Ohio, about 20 miles from Cincinnati. And a similar vehicle from the Northern Kentucky Health Department's Syringe Access/Exchange Program will soon set up in a parking lot at St. Elizabeth's Urgent Care.

"We have seen a 40 percent increase in hepatitis C and a 27 percent increase in HIV cases over the last five years," Julianne Nesbit, the Clermont County health commissioner, told Cincinatti.com, adding that a local survey found that 75 percent of respondents were in favor of the syringe exchange.

As was reported in an earlier POZ newsfeed item, the number of people who inject drugs and who also tested positive for HIV in northern Kentucky more than tripled from 2016 and 2017. The numbers may seem small—from 5 to 18 people—but officials fear that the trend could indicate much larger numbers of undiagnosed cases.

Similarly, Hamilton County, home to Cincinnati and across the Ohio River from northern Kentucky, saw a total of 184 HIV cases last year, amounting to a 34 percent jump from 2016.

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