



Regional Efforts to Support Syringe Services Programs in Vulnerable Communities

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Approximately 70 percent of new hepatitis C infections in the United States occur among people who inject drugs and nine percent of new HIV infections are related to injection drug use. The data show that our nation's substance use crisis and infectious disease epidemics are intersecting and mutually reinforcing, and must be addressed as such.

This past Fall, the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health's (OASH) 10 [Regional Health Administrators](#) (RHAs) hosted three webinars to raise awareness and provide accurate and factual information about comprehensive [syringe services programs](#) (SSPs). The series was a first step of a coordinated effort to support the expansion of SSPs in [communities across the nation vulnerable to outbreaks of hepatitis C and/or HIV among persons who inject drugs](#).

SSPs are community-based prevention programs that provide a range of health services and have the proven ability to help combat the opioid crisis as well as prevent the spread of infectious diseases linked to injection drug use. SSPs offer clients vaccinations, testing for diseases (such as viral hepatitis and HIV), referrals to treatment for substance use disorder and other diseases, and sterile injection equipment to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases. [According to the CDC](#), SSPs are associated with an approximately 50% reduction in HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV) incidence and serve as a bridge to other health services including HIV and HCV diagnosis and treatment and medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder.

The [webinars](#) highlight the nearly 30 years of research showing that comprehensive SSPs are safe, effective, and cost-saving; experiences in gaining statewide support and law enforcement and community buy-in; and tools for on-the-ground implementation. Tools, resources, and guidance on opportunities to successfully support and lead SSPs are provided by subject matter experts from federal and state government and national and community-based organizations.

[View the webinars and learn more](#) about the effectiveness of SSPs, how to implement and expand them, and how the RHAs are working in partnership with the OASH Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other federal,

state, and local stakeholders.

HHS is dedicated to informing communities about SSPs, a critical public health intervention that can serve as an entry point to recovery support services, infectious disease education and testing, and overdose prevention.

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