



TOOLKIT

SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAMS (SSPs)

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WELCOME LETTER

Dear Advocates,

The current restrictions on accessing safe-use supplies in Pennsylvania, due to syringes being classified as paraphernalia, pose significant challenges in expanding Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) statewide. This limitation forces individuals who inject drugs to resort to sharing and reusing syringes, which greatly increases the risk of spreading infectious diseases like HIV and Hepatitis. Additionally, reusing syringes can lead to severe bacterial infections such as abscesses and endocarditis. While SSPs are only legally permitted in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia under local ordinances, the passage of HB 1245 could change this by allowing SSPs to operate legally across the entire state.

Your advocacy and personal stories are crucial in urging legislators to support this bill, as it has the potential to save lives and improve community health. By amplifying your voices and experiences, we can work towards implementing evidence-based policies that prioritize the well-being of individuals who use drugs and promote healthier communities. Your support for HB 1245 is an opportunity to make a lasting impact and pave the way for accessible harm reduction services statewide. Thank you for your dedication and solidarity in this important cause.

**In Solidarity,
PA Harm Reduction Network**



SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAMS BENEFITS

Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) are a vital resource to people who use drugs (PWUD) in decreasing transmission rates of HIV and Hepatitis C, decreasing health complications such as abscesses and endocarditis, and increasing engagement with treatment and access to community resources.

PARTICIPANTS OF SSP'S ARE 5X MORE LIKELY TO ACCESS TREATMENT

- Participants of SSPs are **5x MORE** likely to access treatment.
- SSPs provide important connections to all levels of treatment, medication, and counseling.
- Peer Support is a common resource offered, using lived experience to build relationships with PWUD.

SSP'S DECREASE TRANSMISSION RATES OF HIV & HEPATITIS C BY 50%

- Providing sterile syringes decreases the likelihood of contracting HIV and Hepatitis C.
- SSPs provide access to testing and treatment for Hepatitis C, HIV, and STDs.
- SSPs help decrease additional pressure on the healthcare system by providing access to prevention services.

SSP'S SAVE TAX PAYERS MONEY

- The cost of treating a person with HIV over a lifetime is around \$400,000. Syringe packs cost \$2-4 each.
- Pennsylvania is currently unable to utilize federal funding for SSPs.
- Opioid settlement money in Exhibit E emphasizes SSPs as a beneficial tool for communities. However state law prohibits access to funds.
- SSPs decrease costly healthcare complications due to disease or infections such as endocarditis, HIV, Hep C, and abscesses.



SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAMS FAQs

IS A SAFE INJECTION SITE A SYRINGE SERVICE PROGRAM? NO

- Safe Injection Sites (also known as safe consumption sites or overdose prevention centers) allow for PWUD to consume their drugs in the presence of trained medical and support staff. They also distribute supplies like syringes, naloxone, and wound care.
- SSP participants are not allowed to consume illicit substances on site/premises. SSPs also distribute important supplies and provide vital connections to community resources.

WILL AN SSP PROGRAM BRING CRIME, LITTER, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO USE DRUGS TO MY COMMUNITY? WHAT ABOUT KENSINGTON?

- Kensington stands out as a distinctive open-air drug market, unmatched elsewhere in the country.
- The community has faced a multitude of challenges for over three decades, rooted in poverty, systemic racism, lack of employment opportunities, and being under-resourced.
- People do not come to the area for free syringes. People go to buy drugs.
- SSPs aid in reducing syringe litter by retrieving used syringes and offering secure containers for safe disposal.
- Research shows no rise in crime rates in regions with an SSP.

IS THIS ENABLING DRUG USE? NO

- Harm Reduction does not promote drug use but acknowledges that people will use drugs, offering resources to reduce infectious diseases and prevent fatalities..
- Treatment is not readily available.
- The current drug supply contributes to health issues, prompting PWUD to seek hospitalization or medical clearance before receiving treatment.



ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS

- Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) are crucial for public health as they significantly increase the chances of participants accessing and engaging with treatment services.
- These programs have been successfully operating for over 40 years in the county, and Pennsylvania is one of 12 states where they are not yet legalized.
- SSPs play a role in combating the stigma individuals face in healthcare settings, building relationships with participants, and encouraging them to seek help without the fear of judgment.
- Providing overdose education is a key function of SSPs, teaching People Who Use Drugs (PWUD), family members, and community members how to respond to an overdose.
- SSPs also help protect first responders and community members from accidental needle sticks.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), hospitalizations in the US due to infections from substance use incur costs exceeding \$700 million annually.

Sources:

- <https://legislativeanalysis.org/syringe-services-programs-summary-of-state-laws/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/syringe-services-programs-summary.html>
- <https://elevyst.com/february2023report>
- <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2021/03/syringe-distribution-programs-can-improve-public-health-during-the-opioid-overdose-crisis>
- <https://ascpjournals.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13722-023-00394-x>



SAMPLE EMAIL/LETTER

Dear [Representative],

Pennsylvania is facing alarming rates of overdose deaths and new HIV infections, leading the CDC to identify the state as at risk for HIV and Hepatitis C outbreaks. Enhancing access to Syringe Services Programs can curb outbreaks, reduce fatal overdoses, and promote involvement in treatment services.

[insert your own words or use one of the talking points provided]

I urge [Representative OR Senator] to support **HB 1245** and vote yes!

Sincerely,

Your constituent [your name]



Dear [Senator],

Pennsylvania is facing alarming rates of overdose deaths and new HIV infections, leading the CDC to identify the state as at risk for HIV and Hepatitis C outbreaks. Enhancing access to Syringe Services Programs can curb outbreaks, reduce fatal overdoses, and promote involvement in treatment services.

[insert your own words or use one of the talking points provided]

I urge [Representative OR Senator] to support **HB 1245** and vote yes!

Sincerely,

Your constituent [your name]



SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT

[This script can be read word-for-word or used as a guide]

Hello, my name is _____ and I am from _____[City, County]_____. I am calling to urge [Representative/Senator] to support HB 1245 and vote yes!

Expanding access to Syringe Services Programs to all Pennsylvanians will increase engagement with treatment services, prevent infectious disease outbreaks, and decrease fatal overdoses. Pennsylvania must prioritize saving lives and join the majority of states that support this important resource.

[Add in your own words, or add a talking point].

Every overdose death is preventable. Syringe Services Programs are the most effective tool in saving lives and increasing access to vital tools including fentanyl test strips and naloxone. I urge [Representative/Senator] to support HB 1245 and vote yes.

Tips:

1. Be personal – how is the public health crisis affected you?
2. Be specific – provide an example of how an SSP would benefit your community.



FIND YOUR LEGISLATOR

There are several ways to find
your elected officials.
CLICK LINK BELOW OR SCAN THE QR CODE >



<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/>

**Don't miss out on breaking news and
ways to get involved!**

SIGN UP FOR OUR SUBSCRIBER LIST:

<https://actionnetwork.org/forms/join-pennsylvania-harm-reduction-network>

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