

Michigan Harm Reduction Legislative Summary

Syringe Service Program Authorization (House Bill 5178 of 2023)

What are syringe service programs?

SSPs **prevent** the spread of **HIV and HCV** through vaccinations, testing, and links to care and treatment. They also provide access to and disposal of sterile syringes and injection equipment.

What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a **safe medication** designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdoses.



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Background

The overdose crisis is a public health emergency that dramatically increases both overdose deaths and the risk of HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) outbreaks in our state.

The Michigan Legislature is already taking on the crisis through thoughtful policy changes such as Public Act 176 of 2022, which saves lives with expanded access to naloxone. There is, however, much more we can do.

The next step in the harm reduction model is to increase the number of syringe service programs in Michigan and protect individuals who distribute or use SSP equipment from prosecution.

The risks and costs of needle sharing are clear. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has already identified 11 Michigan counties at a high risk of an HIV outbreak due to syringe sharing. The average lifetime cost of treating one person with HIV is almost \$450,000. The programmatic cost of one new syringe is \$1.

SSPs are harm reduction hubs, connecting people with comprehensive care and substance abuse treatment, providing clean needles, and offering a place for needle exchange to reduce syringe litter and needlestick injuries.

Solution

- Pass legislation authorizing the establishment and operation of SSPs across Michigan.
- Clarify that equipment provided by SSPs, such as needles and syringes, is not considered drug paraphernalia under state or local law.
- Protect individuals obtaining or returning syringes from arrest, prosecution, charges, or convictions.
- Reduce the transmission of HIV, HCV, and other infections.
- Visit a SSP to challenge perceptions and address stigmas.

Drug Testing Strips (House Bill 5179 of 2023)

Background

- Drug testing strips allow individuals to test their supply for the presence of other drugs—notably fentanyl—that they may not know are there.

Impact

- Expanded access to drug testing kits.
- Fewer preventable deaths and more lives saved.

Solution

- Clarify that drug testing kits are not considered drug paraphernalia under state law.
- Protect individuals testing their supply for the presence of hazardous compounds.

Expanding Access to Naloxone (Public Act 176 of 2022)

Public Act 176 permits community-based organizations to purchase and distribute naloxone under a standing order.

SSP participants are **5x more likely** to access recovery and substance use disorder services.

Impact

- Provide life-saving resources.
- Lower risk of HIV and HCV outbreaks.
- Lower the chance of legal consequences for public health workers.
- Save on healthcare costs.
- Increase access to substance use treatment.
- Reduce needlestick injuries and syringe litter.

SSPs **protect first responders and community members** from accidental needlesticks by facilitating the safe disposal of used syringes.

In 2020, Michigan SSPs **saved** at least **2,000 lives** with naloxone.