

The Importance of Syringe Services in North Carolina

Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) are an evidence-based strategy to reduce overdose deaths, slow the transmission of blood-borne pathogens, including HIV and hepatitis C (HCV), and connect participants to treatment and care. North Carolinians are healthier and kept alive because of the work that SSPs do every day.

"We take care of chronic health conditions every day. It is not our job to judge the character of the person we are taking care of. It is our job to reduce the mortality and morbidity in the state of North Carolina."

- Jim Albright, Director of Emergency Services, Guilford County, NC

North Carolina legalized SSPs on July 11, 2016. North Carolina law (G.S. 90-113.27) allows for any governmental or nongovernmental organization "that promotes scientifically proven ways of mitigating health risks associated with drug use and other high-risk behaviors" to legally establish syringe service programs.

"I was one who once did not understand the purpose or need for syringe services and harm reduction. My daughter struggled with substance use disorder long before we knew about it...I assumed she was being enabled and that they were part of the problem. What I have since learned is that what was enabled was for her to not contract diseases and to be brought back from an overdose on 2 different occasions..."

- Caroline Drake, Mother of Kaitlyn Drake & Harm Reduction Advocate

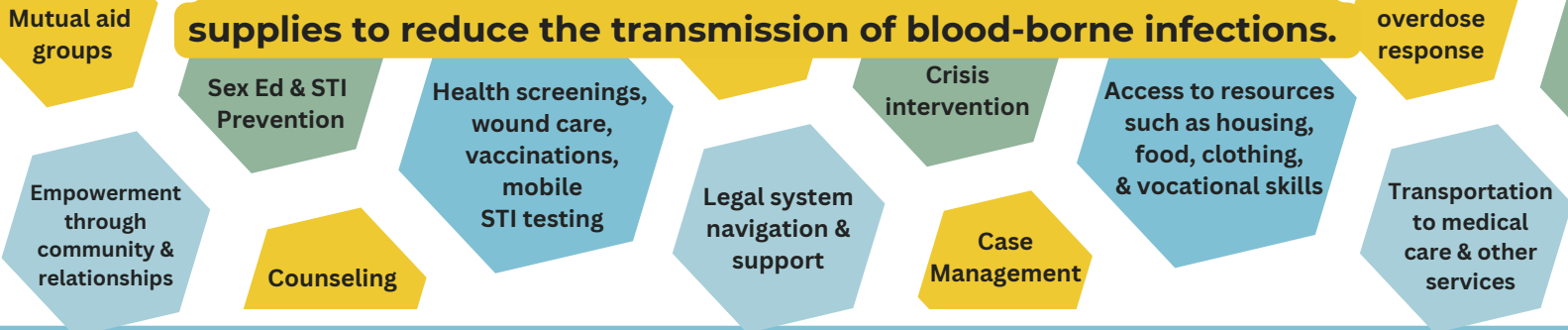
"It is something I would have never imagined I'd be signing 10 years ago... The more dirty needles we have out there, the more dangerous it is for our public safety officials." [1]

- Pat McCrory, former NC Governor, responsible for signing the syringe service bill into law

SSPs in NC are required to provide the services listed below; however they often provide many more.

- Distribution of sterile syringes and new injection supplies at no cost and in sufficient quantities to prevent sharing or reusing
- Disposal services to remove biohazards from the community
- Site, personnel, and equipment security
- Educational materials about overdose and infectious disease prevention and treatment options
- Naloxone (commonly known as the brand name, Narcan®) distribution and training, or referrals to these services
- Referrals to mental health or substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, including medication assisted therapy (MAT)

Syringe Services Programs provide MUCH more than sterile supplies to reduce the transmission of blood-borne infections.



DECREASING SYRINGE LITTER

the *more* syringes SSPs distribute per the number of people who inject drugs in a geographic region

the *more likely* people in that region are to dispose of used syringes safely. [2]

SSPs have been associated with as much as an **86% decrease** in syringe litter in the communities they operate. [3]

SSPs can also host community clean-up events & utilize community sharps bins to decrease syringe litter.

LINKING PEOPLE TO TREATMENT

SSPs connect people who use drugs to substance use treatment in their communities & some even provide treatment services at their facilities.



As many as **four** in five SSP participants are interested in reducing or stopping their substance use. [4]

SSP participants are more than

2x as likely to reduce the frequency of their substance use &

3.5x more likely to stop using substances entirely when compared to those who do not use SSPs. [5]

INCREASING PUBLIC SAFETY

SSP can be associated with:



increased access to HIV & HCV testing and treatment



up to a **50% decline** in risk of HIV transmission [6]

SSPs do not increase the amount of crime in neighborhoods or areas in which they operate. [7][8]

SAVING MONEY

Every action:	Saves money:
\$5 dose of naloxone...	could save \$20,500 in potential medical costs to treat an overdose. [9]
\$1 invested in SSPs...	could save \$6.38-\$7.58 in HIV treatment. [10]
\$0.10 sterile syringe...	could save \$250,000 for a heart valve replacement due to endocarditis plus the cost of a 4-8-week hospital stay. [11]
\$1 invested in substance use disorder treatment...	could save \$4-\$7 in criminal justice related costs. [12]

SAVING LIVES

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have endorsed SSPs as one of the most effective, scientifically proven overdose prevention strategies. [12]

Over **15,000** overdose reversals were reported to SSPs between July '21 and June '22. This is the equivalent of **saving the lives of all the residents** in NC's three smallest counties combined (Graham, Hyde, Tyrrell). [13]

[*Click for complete list of references](#)