

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, such as HIV and hepatitis C (HCV), and connect participants to coordinated care. North Carolinians are healthier and 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 law (G.S. 90-113.27, passed July 11, 2016) 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

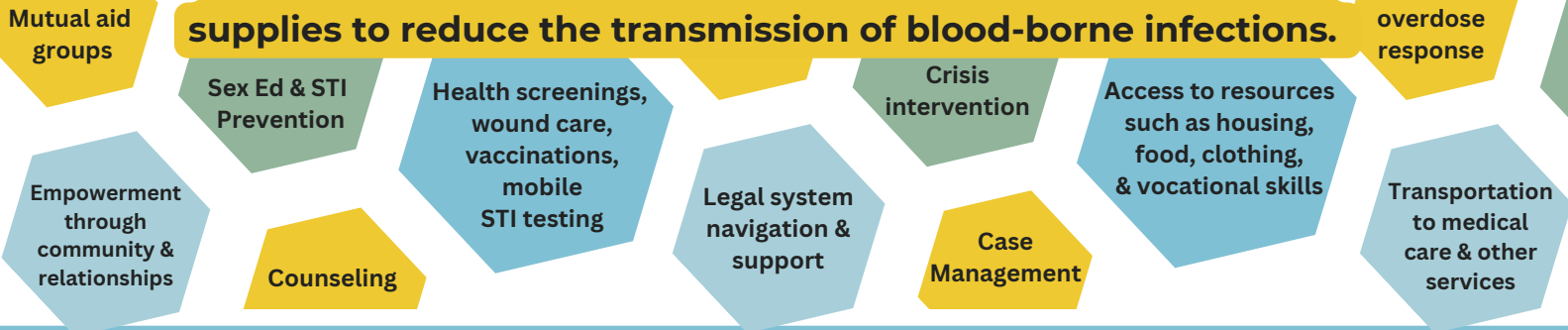
"Focusing on interventions that meet people where they are and connecting them to care is key to regaining ground and saving lives" [1]

- Kody H. Kinsley, Secretary, NC Department of Health and Human Services

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

- Distribution of enough free sterile syringes and injection supplies to prevent sharing or reusing
- Disposal services to remove biohazards from the community
- Community site, personnel, and equipment security
- Educational materials about overdose and infectious disease prevention and treatment options
- Distribution of naloxone (commonly known as the brand name, Narcan®), training on administration, or referrals to these services
- Referrals for 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 can distribute compared to the number of people who inject drugs in a geographic region

the *more likely* syringes will be disposed of safely in that region. [2]

SSPs have been associated with as much as an **86% decrease** in syringe litter in the communities where 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 community treatment services & some SSPs provide it at their own facilities.



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

SSP participants are more than

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

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

INCREASING PUBLIC SAFETY

SSPs 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 where 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 injection-related 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) has 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 to **saving the lives of all residents** in Graham, Hyde, and Tyrrell counties combined. [13]

*Click for list of numbered references