

FAQ: SB 410 Increasing Syringe Access & Preventing Needlestick Injuries

What would this law do?

This law will allow for Syringe Services Programs and over-the-counter sales via pharmacies to anyone who needs sterile injection equipment in Nevada. Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) provide *sterile* syringes and collect *used* syringes to reduce transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis, and other bloodborne infections associated with reuse of contaminated injection equipment by drug users. Also under this law, a pharmacist or pharmacy employee may supply sterile syringes and other related material to anyone without concern about liability; and a prescription shall not be required to obtain syringes and other related material from a pharmacy. Most SSPs are part of a comprehensive health promotion effort that includes HIV and viral hepatitis counseling and testing, education on reducing sexual and drug use-related health risks, referral to drug treatment, and referral to other medical and social services. They also reduce the improper disposal of syringes and needlestick injuries to first responders.

Will increased syringe access encourage drug use?

In 2011, the US Surgeon General determined that SSPs are effective in **reducing drug abuse** and the risk of infection with the etiologic agent for acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Eight U.S. funded studies, including studies conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Institute of Medicine, as well as numerous scientific studies that were not federally funded, have established that syringe services programs are both an effective HIV prevention intervention and **do not promote drug use**. Comparison studies show that people who utilize a syringe service program are **more likely to enter drug treatment** programs than those who do not access such programs.

Will programs like this put more needles into the community in parks and on the streets?

The presence of a syringe program is associated with a sharp decrease in improper public discard of needles and syringes. A recent study assessed syringe disposal practices in a city that has a syringe service program (San Francisco) to a city that does not have a syringe service program (Miami) and found that in Miami, 95% of syringes were inappropriately discarded as compared to San Francisco where they found 13% of syringes inappropriately discarded (Tookes, 2011). In Baltimore, MD after a syringe service program was implemented, the number of inappropriately discarded syringes decreased by almost 50% and in Portland, OR by two-thirds.

What about needle sticks to law enforcement and first responders?

Research shows that SSPs protect law enforcement personnel from needle stick injuries which could result in the transmission of disease such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C. SSPs actively encourage and educate clients about safe disposal in order to lessen the number of improperly discarded syringes. SSPs supply puncture-proof “sharps” containers and information on safe disposal practices. Decriminalizing syringes reduces the fear of legal repercussions thereby increasing the chances of self-disclosure of possession of sharps before a pat-down.

What is the cost effectiveness of SSPs?

SSPs lower health care costs. SSPs prevent HIV infection at an estimated cost of \$4,000-\$12,000 per averted infection. For every HIV infection that is prevented, an estimated \$355,000 is saved in the cost of providing lifetime HIV treatment. SSPs prevent hepatitis C infection, at an estimated lifetime treatment cost of \$500,000 per averted infection. A sterile syringe can cost as little as 97-cents

What do syringe service programs look like?

All SSPs look different depending on the program; however, a comprehensive SSP typically provides the following services: Access to sterile hypodermic devices and injection supplies (i.e. cookers, cotton filters, alcohol wipes); Provide a place to dispose of sharps and provide take-home sharps containers; Referrals to mental health, treatment and health care providers; Counseling and HIV/HCV/TB testing; Condom distribution and education on safer sex practices; Overdose prevention education