



HEALTHY MINDS
POLICY INITIATIVE

Harm Reduction Protections for Medical Practitioners, First Responders

HB 1005 and SB 511 by Rep. Bush and Sen. Montgomery

*House Bill 1005 will **reduce unsafe dirty needles** in our communities, **protect first responders** and **connect more Oklahomans to addiction recovery services** amid an addiction crisis caused by the pandemic. This bill allows medical practitioners, law enforcement, tribes and registered social service entities to administer harm reduction syringe service exchange programs with careful oversight by the State Department of Health.*

Protecting Public Health and Safety

- **COVID-19 has rapidly increased drug addiction and deaths.** Deaths from synthetic opioid overdose, alone, have increased by at least 50 percent in Oklahoma since the pandemic began.ⁱ
- Harm reduction programs **reduce drug use** over time by connecting individuals to treatment who otherwise wouldn't get it.ⁱⁱ
- Needles are already here – that's why we need this. Needles are re-used, shared, and left out in the open or unsafely put in the trash. Syringe exchange programs have resulted in an **86 percent reduction in needles on sidewalks and in parks.**ⁱⁱⁱ
- These programs **reduce the spread of infectious diseases** like HIV and Hepatitis C.^{iv} Oklahoma's rate of HIV and Hepatitis C has increased in recent years due to opioid and subsequent heroin use.^v

Protecting Law Enforcement and First Responders

- 1 in 3 officers will experience a needle stick injury over the course of his or her career.^{vi} Approximately 25 percent will experience more than one needle stick injury.
- Syringe programs have been shown to **reduce law enforcement needle stick injuries** by as much as 66 percent by keeping streets cleaner.^{vii}
- In other states, the rate of **violent crime has decreased** due to the implementation of programs like these.^{viii}

Right for Oklahoma

- Numerous **conservative states** have realized these benefits and allowed such programs, including West Virginia, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, North Carolina, North Dakota, Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia and Nebraska.^{ix} While Governor of Indiana, Mike Pence authorized such a program in 2015.^x
- These programs **save money.** The Institute of Medicine estimates that each syringe program may produce up to \$50,000 in savings per each prevented spread of HIV.^{xi}

References

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- ⁱⁱ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. “Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) FAQs.” www.cdc.gov/ssp/syringe-services-programs-faq.html
- ⁱⁱⁱ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. “What are Syringe Service Programs?” www.cdc.gov/ssp/docs/SSP-Infographic_print.pdf
- ^{iv} Center for Disease Control and Prevention. “HIV and Viral Hepatitis.” June 2017. www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/library/factsheets/hiv-viral-hepatitis.pdf
- ^v National Institute on Drug Abuse. “Oklahoma Opioid Summary.” Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths. March 2019. www.drugabuse.gov/opioid-summaries-by-state/oklahoma-opioid-summary
- ^{vi} Davis, CS, & Beletsky, L. Bundling occupational safety with harm reduction information as a feasible method for improving police receptiveness to syringe access programs: evidence from three U.S. cities. *Harm reduction journal*, 2009;6, 16. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2716314/
- ^{vii} Maddox A, Moreno C, and Boyd L. Tulsa Harm Reduction. Presentation at Oklahoma State University. May 2019.
- ^{viii} Marx MA, Crape B, Brookmeyer RS, et al. Trends in crime and the introduction of a needle exchange program. *Am J Public Health*.2000;90(12),1933-1936. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1446444/pdf/11111271.pdf
- ^{ix} Knight, V. “Needle Exchanges Find New Champions Among Republicans.” *Kaiser Health News*. May 9, 2019. khn.org/news/needle-exchanges-find-new-champions-among-republicans/
- ^x Janowicz, D. HIV Transmission and Injection Drug Use: Lessons Learned from the Indiana Outbreak. *Topics in Antiviral Medicine*. 2016; Jul-Aug; 24(2): 90-92. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6148928/
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