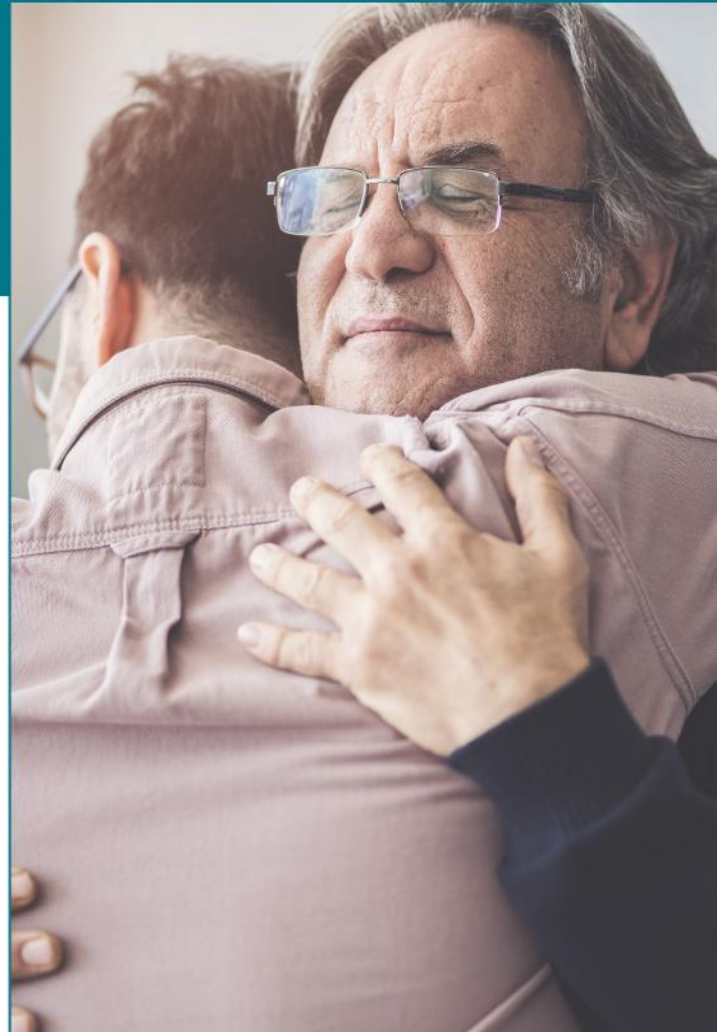


# Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) FAQs



## What is an SSP?

Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) are community-based programs that provide access to sterile needles and syringes, facilitate safe disposal of used syringes, and provide and link to other important services and programs such as:

- Substance use disorder treatment programs.
- Screening, care, and treatment for viral hepatitis and HIV.
- Naloxone distribution and education.
- Mental health and other medical and social services.
- Education about overdose prevention and safer injection practices.
- Vaccinations, including those for hepatitis A and hepatitis B.
- Screening for sexually transmitted diseases.
- Abscess and wound care.



## Are SSPs legal?

Some states have passed laws specifically legalizing SSPs because of their life-saving potential. SSPs may also be legal in states where possession and distribution of syringes without a prescription are legal.

Decisions about use of SSPs as part of prevention programs are made at the state and local levels. The Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 includes language that gives states and local communities meeting certain criteria the opportunity to use federal funds provided through the Department of Health and Human Services to support certain components of SSPs, with the exception of provision of needles, syringes, or other equipment used solely for the purposes of illicit drug use.



U.S. Department of  
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# Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) FAQs - Continued

## Do SSPs help people to stop using drugs? Yes.

- People who are injecting drugs using an SSP are more likely to enter treatment for substance use disorder and stop injecting than those who don't use an SSP.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>
- New users of SSPs are five times as likely to enter drug treatment.
- People who inject drugs and used an SSP regularly are nearly three times likely to report a reduction in injection frequency as those who have never used an SSP.<sup>2</sup>

## Do SSPs reduce infections? Yes.

- Sharing needles and works can lead to transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis, bacterial, and fungal infections and other complications by providing access to sterile syringes and other injection equipment.
- SSPs help people prevent transmitting bloodborne infections when they inject drugs or provide easy-to-access treatment care.<sup>5,6,7</sup>
- SSPs can prevent other life-threatening and costly health problems, such as infections of the heart (endocarditis), serious skin infections, and deep tissue abscesses.

## Do SSPs lead to more crime and/or drug use? No.

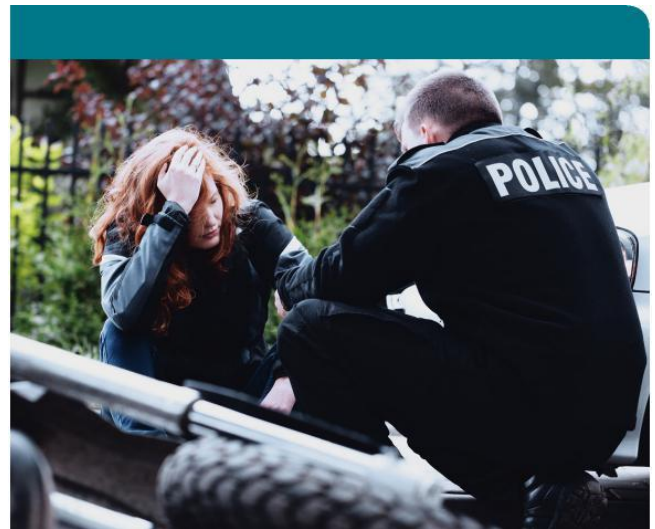
- Data shows that SSPs do not cause or increase illegal drug use, crime or violence within a community.<sup>14,15</sup>

## Are SSPs cost effective? Yes.

- SSPs reduce health care costs by preventing HIV, viral hepatitis, and other infections.
- The estimated lifetime cost of treating one person living with HIV is more than \$450,000.<sup>16</sup>
- Hospitalizations in the U.S. for substance-use-related infections cost over \$700 million each year.<sup>17</sup>

## Do SSPs cause more needles in public places? No.

- Studies show that SSPs protect the public and first responders by providing safe needle disposal and reducing the presence of needles in the community.<sup>8,9,10,11,12,13</sup>



# St. Clair County's Harm Reduction: Syringe Services Program (SSP) FACTS

## What is Harm Reduction?

It is a **movement** for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people. People can get help “where they're at,” at their own pace, and make healthier choices to prevent disease.

It is both a **strategy** and **tool**. The strategy is defined as a set of practical public health strategies designed to reduce the negative consequences of drug use, lead people to a healthy lifestyle and build a better community. The tool guides us to manage the gap between active substance use and recovery to reverse overdoses, and reduce the negative impacts of behaviors that can cause harm.

## What is the role of the Health Department in combating drug use?

The Health Department combats drug use by:

- Partnering with other community organizations that work with people using drugs.
- Acknowledging and advocating that there is a direct relationship between the health of the community and substance use issues.
- Hosting a comprehensive SSP called, “Harm Reduction”.



## What does The Harm Reduction do?

Harm Reduction provides naloxone kits, recovery information, safe needle disposal resources, rapid HCV and HIV testing, and first aid / hygiene items on-site at the main location of the Health Department and through an on-the-go Mobile Unit to meet people “where they're at”.

Providing stigma-free services by using person-centered language, avoiding bias, providing education, and building rapport/trust with clients by alleviating harm along the way is a goal of Harm Reduction.

Harm Reduction is located at St. Clair County Health Department 3415 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Port Huron, MI 48060. Hours of operation are Monday 10:00 am – 6:00 pm and Tuesday through Friday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. No appointment necessary. A short intake is required for services.

**Disclaimer:** Local dollars are not used to support the St. Clair County Health Department's Harm Reduction program.

“ Harm Reduction addresses the negative impacts of substance use with care and compassion. For many, this trust allows them to further their recovery journey and be open enough to ask for resources. All while preventing, Hep C, HIV, and overdose.

**RECOVERY IS AN EVOLUTION.**  
Not a sudden miracle.

**HARM REDUCTION**  
ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
SUPPORT • SAFETY • SUCCESS

Adopted by  
Red Project, Grand Rapids, MI

## Endnotes

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