The Infectious Disease Elimination Act: Working to Eliminate Infectious Diseases in Florida

HIV and hepatitis C burden in Florida
HIV diagnoses have been gradually increasing in Florida since 2013. Over the past 5 years (2014–2018), HIV diagnoses among people who inject drugs (PWID) have increased by 10%. Report acute hepatitis C cases have increased by more than 160% over the same time period. New hepatitis C cases are often associated with drug use and sharing injection drug equipment.

Infectious Disease Elimination Act (IDEA)
IDEA, section 381.0038(4), Florida Statutes, was passed in 2016 and amended in 2019 to allow county commissions to authorize syringe exchange programs (SEPs) in their county by way of county ordinance. IDEA exchange programs are to provide one-to-one syringe exchange as well as wrap around services to prevent disease transmission. County commissions must contract with one of the following entities to operate the program: a licensed hospital, a licensed health care clinic, an accredited medical school in Florida, a licensed addictions receiving facility, or a 501(c)3 HIV/AIDS service organization. The Department of Health will collect data from these programs and provide consultation to the county commission for the operation of the program.

What are SEPs?
SEPs, also referred to as syringe services programs (SSPs) or needle exchange programs (NEPs), are community-based services that provide comprehensive resources in nonjudgmental environments to people who inject drugs or other medications. Studies show SEPs can significantly reduce overdose-related deaths and prevent infectious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis B and C.

HIV and hepatitis C in Florida, 2014–2018

1,522

of the 23,650 (6%) adult (age 13+) persons who received an HIV diagnosis were PWID.

1,024

of the 10,357 (10%) adult persons who received an AIDS diagnosis were PWID.

48,380

acute and chronic hepatitis C cases among persons less than 40 years old were reported. 955 were acute hepatitis C cases, of which 151 (16%) had documented injection drug use (IDU) in the previous six months.

HIV diagnoses with reported IDU and hepatitis C cases vary by county
The map below shows the number of HIV diagnoses with IDU as a reported risk and the 5-year average rate per 100,000 population of acute and chronic hepatitis C cases among persons <40 years old by county of residence at diagnosis, 2014–2018.

Data Sources
1. HIV Data from Florida Department of Health (DOH), HIV/AIDS Section. Data as of 6/30/2019.
2. Hepatitis data from DOH, Hepatitis Section. Data as of 1/31/2020. Hepatitis data by calendar year in this factsheet may differ from data available on Florida CHARTS or other reports using report year.
SEPs can reduce overdose deaths
Florida could benefit from a reduction in overdose deaths. Florida observed an 87% increase in total drug overdose deaths from 2014 to 2018.
SEPs offer education about overdose prevention and safer injection practices. They also provide access to naloxone, the overdose reversal medication.

SEPs can reduce costs related to providing public health and safety services
The risk of acquiring blood-borne diseases like HIV and hepatitis C can be substantially reduced when sterile needles, syringes, and works are used for every injection. By reducing disease transmission, SEPs can save health care costs. The lifetime cost of treating an individual living with hepatitis C is estimated at nearly $65,000, and the lifetime cost of treating a person living with HIV is between $326,500 and $435,200; a sterile syringe can cost less than a dollar.

IDEA SEPs in Florida may offer the following services:
- Free one-to-one exchange of syringes and safe disposal of used equipment
- Viral hepatitis and HIV testing, treatment, and prevention
- Overdose prevention and harm reduction
- Referral to substance use treatment programs
- Vaccinations, including for hepatitis A and B
- Referral to social, mental health, and medical services
- Abscess and wound care

Naloxone Locator
Naloxone, the overdose reversal medication, is free and available to individuals who are at risk of experiencing an opioid overdose.
To find a naloxone kit provider, visit http://isavefl.com/locator.shtml

Substance Use Hotline
For free and confidential information in English and Spanish for individuals facing substance use and mental health issues, call 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

HIV/AIDS Resources
For information on HIV/AIDS, call or visit
1-800-FLA-AIDS (352-2437) English
1-800-545-SIDA (545-7432) Spanish
1-800-AIDS-101 (243-7101) Haitian Creole
1-800-503-7118 Hearing/Speech Impaired
www.211bigbend.org/flhivaidshotline
Text ‘FLHIV’ or ‘flhiv’ to 898211

For more information visit floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/idea/index.html or email SEPinfo@flhealth.gov

Data Sources

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