

VOCAL-NY and Harm Reduction Coalition Hepatitis C 2017 State Budget and Legislative Platform

Well over 200,000 New Yorkers are living with chronic hepatitis C (or HCV). About 50% of those who have the virus are completely unaware of their status. Although curable, HCV kills more people than HIV/AIDS and 59 other infectious disease combined.

Consistently flat-funded at less than \$2 million a year, **we recommend an additional \$10.8 million in new funding** to fill critical service and surveillance gaps across the state.

We Propose 4 KEY Additions: Increase funding for HCV programs in order to increase...

1. Statewide HCV Surveillance

- NYS currently lacks resources to monitor the HCV epidemic, investigate new outbreaks, and utilize epidemiological data to efficiently guide public health resources.

2. Prevention

- The statewide increase in prescription opioid and heroin injecting, especially among young people, has put a new generation at risk of HCV infection.
- There is an increase in new infections among MSM and Trans women.
- NYS should invest in buprenorphine prescribing now that the federal government changed their policy to increase access to this treatment.

3. Linkage To Care & Treatment

- HCV peer and patient navigation services modeled on programs developed to combat the HIV epidemic have been vital to engaging and retaining people in care and treatment.
- Expand treatment in primary care settings.
- Expand educational opportunities for medical providers, HCV testers, and linkage to care staff.
- Develop and Implement an HCV Awareness Campaign to Inform and Educate the Public and Health and Social Service Providers.

4. Criminal Justice Initiative

- Expand the Existing NYS DOH Criminal Justice Initiative (CJI) in State and Local Correctional Facilities to Include Hepatitis C Prevention, Opt-out or Universal HCV Screening, and Support Services.

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LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

A. Decriminalize syringe possession and reform the Expanded Syringe Access Program.

NYS Bills: (A.5471-Gottfried / S.4099-Rivera)

- Repeal the criminal law on syringe possession.
- Remove the limit on the sale of syringes/needles per transaction (10 Syringes).
- Remove the ban on advertising, allowing pharmacies to display the availability of syringes to the public.
- Include authorization of a grant program (mentioned in the endorsed ETE proposal earlier).

B. Safer Drug Use Services and Facilities to Prevent Overdose and the Transmission of Infectious Disease.

NYS Bills: (Currently being drafted)

- Authorize DOH to license safer drug use services such as supervised safe consumption spaces.
- Integrate these spaces into existing harm reduction programs to provide wrap-around services.

C. Authorize the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision and DOH to establish HCV prevention programs in every state prison.

NYS Bills: (A.4256-Gottfried / S.1017-Montgomery)

- Establish programs that include education, counseling, and other prevention efforts.
- Distribute condoms to prevent the spread of HCV, HIV, and other blood-borne and STIs.