

### BACKGROUND

In New York City (NYC), 116,000 people were infected with hepatitis C (Hep C). Treating and curing Hep C reduces the risk of liver disease, cancer and premature death, and prevents ongoing transmission of the virus.

Sharing drug use equipment is the leading risk factor for Hep C infection. People who use drugs face barriers to accessing Hep C care and treatment, including stigma, homelessness, mental health issues and medication restrictions.

Peer navigators have the unique lived experience, knowledge and skills necessary to help people who use drugs overcome barriers to Hep C testing, care and treatment, and prevent (re)infection.

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The NYC Hep C Peer Navigation Program was established in 2014 through funding from the New York City Council and is administered by the NYC Health Department. Funding from the New York City Council allows syringe exchange programs to train and employ part-time peer navigators.

The program goal is to prevent Hep C as well as navigate people at risk through testing, treatment and cure. Peers are trained to provide:

- Outreach to people at risk
- Hep C health promotion and prevention services
- Assistance accessing supportive services
- Navigation through complete Hep C testing, linkage to care and retention in care

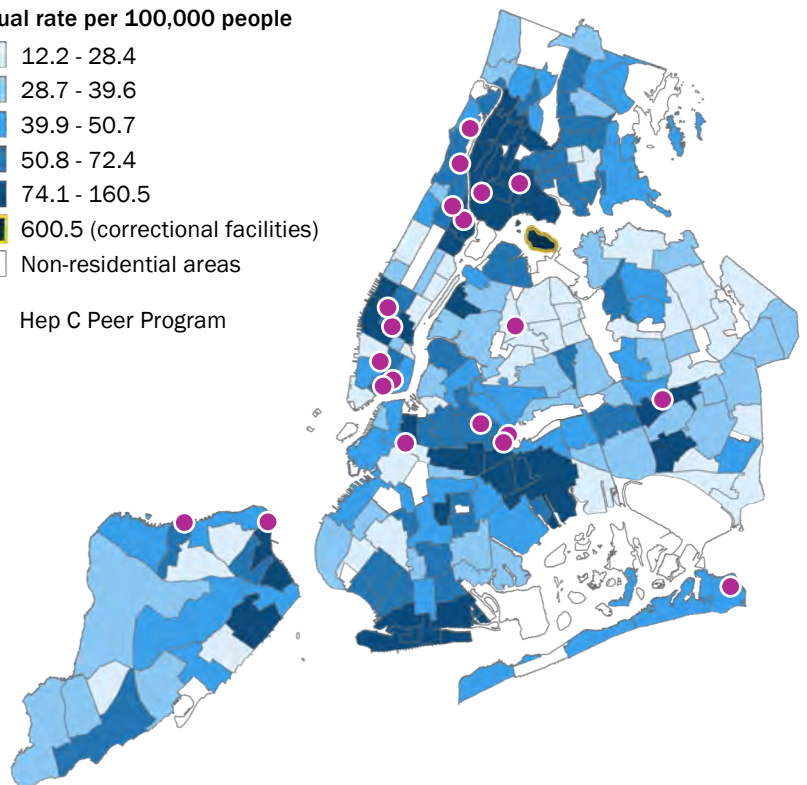
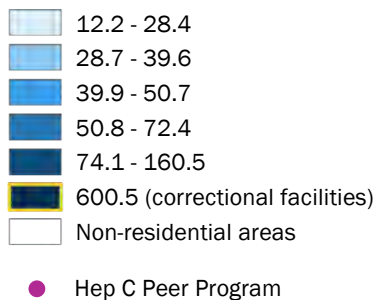
### HEP C IN NYC AND HEP C PEER PROGRAM LOCATIONS

The following map shows the rate of newly reported Hep C cases in 2017 by neighborhood tabulation area and the NYC Hep C Peer Navigation Program locations.

#### Funded Organizations:

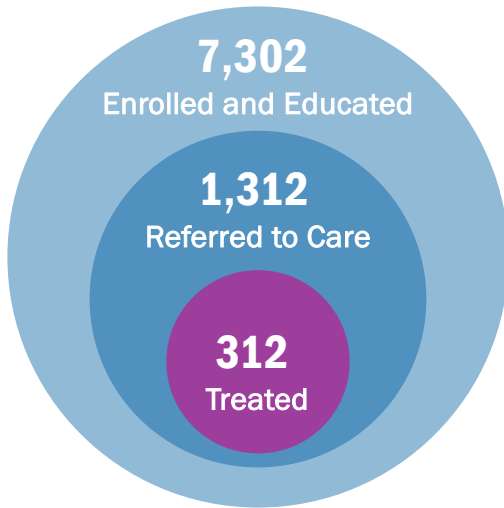
1. Alliance for Positive Change
2. After Hours Project
3. AIDS Center of Queens County
4. BOOM!Health
5. Community Health Action of Staten Island
6. Family Services Network of New York
7. Harlem United FROST'D
8. Housing Works Crosby Street
9. New York Harm Reduction Educators
10. Positive Health Project
11. Praxis Housing Initiatives
12. Safe Horizon Streetworks
13. St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction
14. VOCAL-NY
15. Washington Heights CORNER Project

#### Annual rate per 100,000 people

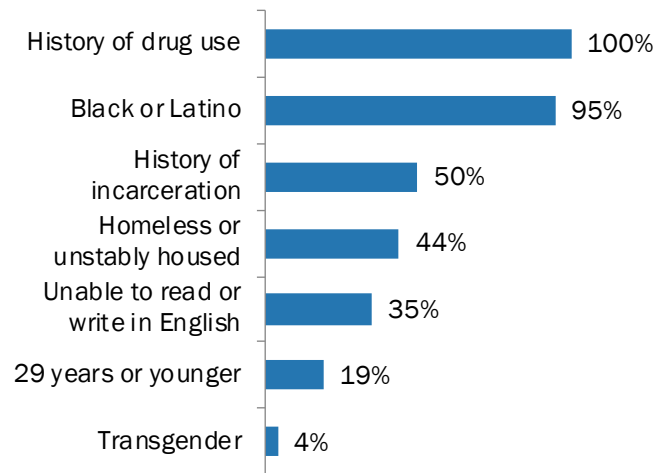


### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

From January 1, 2015, to June 30, 2018, 7,302 people at risk for Hep C were enrolled and educated. Of these, 1,312 people infected with Hep C were referred to care, and 312 were treated for Hep C and likely cured.



Patient Characteristics



Peer navigators are uniquely able to reach people who use drugs and are at risk for or living with Hep C. They reach thousands of people each year, a considerably higher number than comparable navigation programs.

### PROGRAM FINDINGS

Funded organizations identified the following gaps limiting the impact of the program:

- Resources to support full-time Hep C navigation staff at all 15 syringe exchange programs
- Stable continuous funding for the Hep C Peer Navigation Program to prevent service interruptions
- Resources to provide housing access services for program participants
- Resources and support to offer Hep C treatment at syringe exchange programs
- Interventions to reduce provider stigma against people who use drugs

“ A true lesson from this program is accepting people where they are. If you are homeless, Hep C can be the least of your priorities at that moment. I had to rethink how I approached people to make sure Hep C is addressed. ”

– NYC Hep C peer navigator

“ When this program began in 2014, another navigator started out with this gentleman in the SRO [single room occupancy] . He was resistant to everything and he was still smoking crack. I took over the site and picked up where the navigator left off with this individual. Today he is in HIV care, cleared of Hep C and has his own apartment (because he’s been living in SROs ever since he’s been ill). He has a job and is going back to school. ”

– NYC Hep C peer navigator