



Campaign for a Healthier New Jersey

The Economic Cost to New Jersey's Taxpayers

Restricting access to sterile syringes is not only bad public health policy, it is bad economic policy. There are currently approximately 32,300 people living with HIV in New Jersey. More than half of them became infected by sharing contaminated needles, or having sex with someone who did. The current estimated lifetime cost of care for someone living with HIV is \$618,000. This means New Jersey has spent, and will continue to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on medical costs to treat injection-related HIV infections that could have been prevented by access to sterile syringes.

In addition, New Jersey is experiencing a new epidemic of hepatitis C. It is estimated that over 144,000 New Jerseyans are infected with the hepatitis C virus. On average hepatitis C costs about \$100,000 to treat. The New Jersey Department of Corrections estimates that it will cost between 4 and 8 million dollars a year just to treat prisoners infected with hepatitis C

Research on the cost effectiveness of syringe access has consistently shown that not only does syringe access save lives—it saves money.

- A recent report from the Australian Government found that cities that introduced syringe access programs had a mean annual 18.6% decrease in HIV seroprevalence, compared with a mean annual 8.1% increase in cities that did not introduce syringe access programs. The national savings from combined HIV and hepatitis C cases averted totaled almost 800 million dollars.
- A report by the HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council of New York City found that if a public health program that offered syringe exchange services prevented just two new HIV infections a year, the program would be cost effective.
- A report on the cost effectiveness of a syringe access program in Alberta, Canada found that there was a cost effectiveness ratio of less than \$10,000 per HIV case averted, well below the then-current lifetime HIV care cost of \$150,000.

A clean needle costs about 7¢.

**Lifetime AIDS treatment costs about \$618,000,
and lifetime hepatitis C treatment costs about \$100,000.**

The math is simple. So is the solution.

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