

### Why Do Harm Reduction Efforts Matter?

Harm reduction is a public health approach that aims to reduce the negative impacts of substance use. Syringe service programs (SSPs) are community-based prevention programs that participate in harm reduction efforts every day across Michigan.

Harm reduction  
meets people  
where they are

Connects people  
with life-sustaining  
health services

Reduces overdose  
deaths in Michigan



**727,000** people died from opioid overdose nationwide between 1999 and 2022.<sup>1</sup>



SSPs are associated with an estimated 50% reduction in HIV and HCV incidence.<sup>2</sup>



Following passage of PA 167 of 2022 expanding access to naloxone, Michigan deaths **decreased to 1,927 in 2024 from 2,931 in 2023.**<sup>3</sup>



Opioid overdose deaths **decreased by 14%** in states that enacted naloxone access laws.<sup>4</sup>

**Now is the time to increase support and funding for these lifesaving programs.**

### What Is Hindering Harm Reduction's Success?



An inconsistent patchwork of different laws across the state means that many Michigan municipalities continue to criminalize harm reduction activities.



### What Do Solutions Look Like?

To continue the unprecedented decline of overdose deaths in Michigan, the legislature must:

- Authorize SSPs statewide
- Legalize harm reduction services such as fentanyl test strips
- Ensure sufficient funding to maintain and grow these lifesaving programs statewide

Legislation to authorize the establishment and operation of SSPs statewide will:



Clarify that healthcare supplies provided by SSPs, such as syringes and drug testing equipment, are not drug paraphernalia under state or local law



Protect individuals obtaining or returning syringes from SSPs from legal consequences (arrest, prosecution, charges, or conviction)



Reduce the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) due to needle sharing



Protect law enforcement and the public from accidental needlesticks

**Allocating local and state funding to SSPs and harm reduction services will ensure sustained efforts to save lives.**

# About Syringe Service Programs

## How Do SSPs Reduce Substance Use Harms, Save Lives, and Protect Communities?

### Keep people alive by preventing overdoses

Michigan has distributed over **730,000 naloxone kits** and recorded **over 6,600 overdose reversals** between 2020 and 2024 via its Naloxone Direct Portal.<sup>5</sup>

Fentanyl test strips are tied to safer drug use and greater overdose prevention.<sup>6</sup>

### Reduce crime by linking people to drug treatment, housing, and other social services

SSPs do not lead to increased arrests for drug possession, violent crime, or assaults against police.<sup>7</sup>

### Keep people healthy by offering comprehensive care

SSP participants are **5x more likely** to access recovery and substance use disorder services and about **3x more likely** to reduce or quit injection drug use.<sup>8</sup>

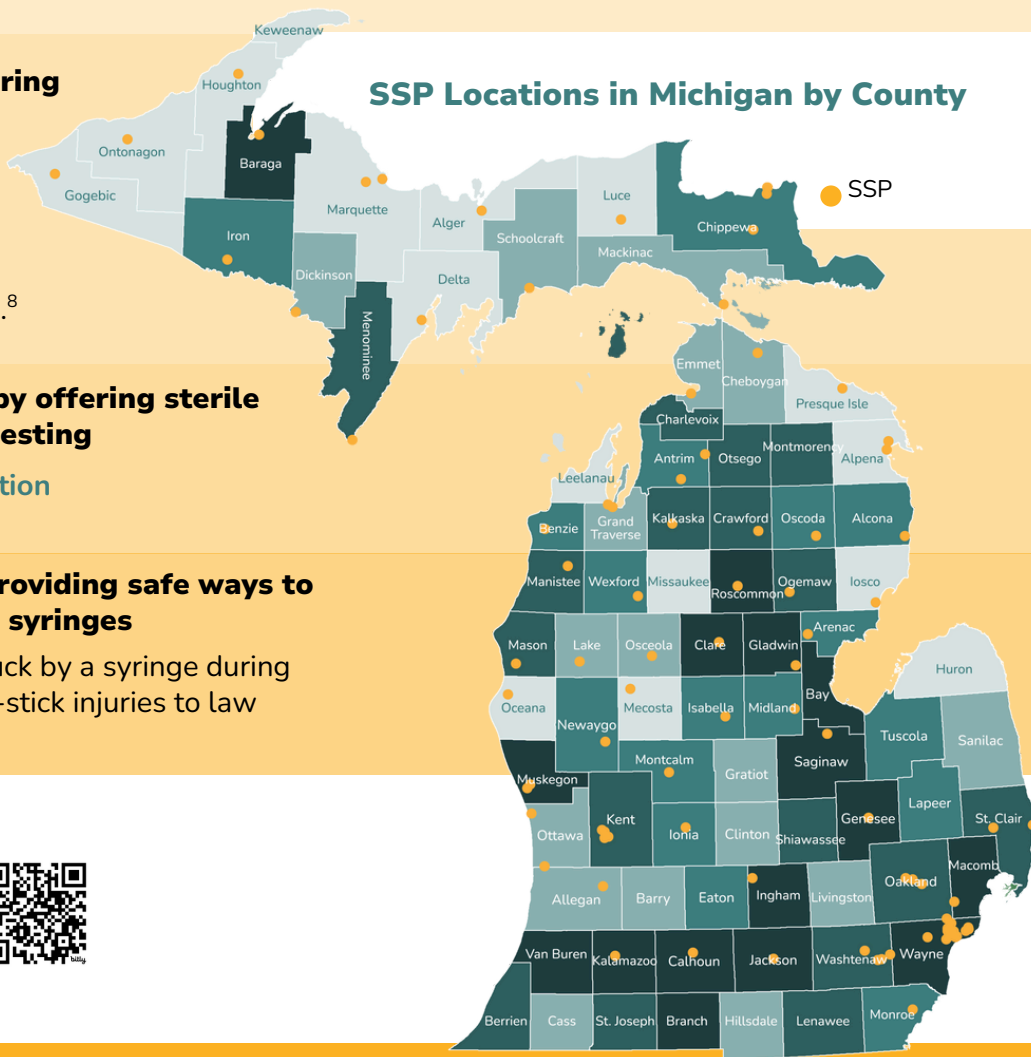
### Slow the spread of disease by offering sterile syringes, vaccinations, and testing

SSPs are linked to a **50% reduction** in HIV and HCV infections.<sup>9</sup>

### Keep communities safe by providing safe ways to dispose of used needles and syringes

**One in three officers** will be stuck by a syringe during their career. SSPs lower needle-stick injuries to law enforcement by 66%.<sup>10</sup>

### SSP Locations in Michigan by County



 **Michigan Overdose  
Prevention Coalition**  
[mioverdoseprevention.com](https://mioverdoseprevention.com)



#### SOURCES

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2021. "CDC WONDER." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://wonder.cdc.gov/>.

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. February 8, 2024. "Syringe Services Programs." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/syringe-services-programs/php/index.html>

<sup>3</sup>Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. n.d. Michigan Overdose Data to Action Dashboard. <https://www.michigan.gov/opioids/category-data>

<sup>4</sup>Chandler McClellan et al. November 2018. "Opioid-Overdose Laws Association with Opioid Use and Overdose Mortality." *Addictive Behaviors* 86: 90-95.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0306460318301382>

<sup>5</sup>Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. February 29, 2024. "Michigan Addressing Racial Disparities in Overdose Deaths Through Harm Reduction, Other Data-Driven Programs in Upcoming Year." *Michigan Department of Health and Human Services*. <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/inside-mdhhs/newsroom/2024/02/29/harm-reduction>

<sup>6</sup>Nicholas C. Peiper et al. January 2019. "Fentanyl Test Strips as an Opioid Overdose Prevention Strategy: Findings from a Syringe Services Program in the Southeastern United States." *International Journal of Drug Policy* (63): 122-128. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0955395918302135>

<sup>7</sup>M.A. Marx et al. December 2000. "Trends in Crime and the Introduction of a Needle Exchange Program." *American Journal of Public Health* 90(12): 1933-1936. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11111271/>

<sup>8</sup>H. Hagan et al. October 2000. "Reduced Injection Frequency and Increased Entry and Retention in Drug Treatment Associated with Needle-Exchange Participation in Seattle Drug Injectors." *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 19(3): 247-252. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11027894/>

<sup>9</sup>Ricardo M. Fernandes et al. April 11, 2017. "Effectiveness of Needle and Syringe Programmes in People Who Inject Drugs—An Overview of Systematic Reviews." *BMC Public Health* 17(1): 309.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28399843/>

<sup>10</sup>S.L. Groseclose et al. September 1, 1995. "Impact of Increased Legal Access to Needles and Syringes on Practices of Injecting-Drug Users and Police Officers—Connecticut, 1992-1993." *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes and Human Retrovirology* 10(1): 82-89. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7648290/>