



Executive Summary

Campaign for a Healthier New Jersey

New Jersey's HIV/AIDS Epidemic

In New Jersey, injection drug use is the single most important factor in the transmission of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C. Nationally, injection drug use accounts for 25% of HIV infections, but in New Jersey, it accounts for 44% of infections. New Jersey has the fifth highest rate of adult HIV, the third highest rate of HIV among children, and the highest percentage of women infected with HIV in the nation. In addition, the injection-related hepatitis C rate is rapidly rising, signaling a new public health emergency.

The Solution is Greater Access to Syringes

Removing the legal barriers to sterile syringe access would:

- reduce the transmission of injection-related diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C
- increase safe disposal of used syringes
- provide a bridge to effective drug treatment and other health services for injection drug users
- save New Jersey millions of dollars in health care costs.

The trend among state legislatures is to remove the legal barriers to sterile syringe access by allowing for pharmacy sales of syringes without a prescription, and removing syringes from the drug paraphernalia statutes to allow doctors and other public health professionals to provide sterile syringes as part of a comprehensive disease prevention plan.

In 1996, the New Jersey Governor's Advisory Council on AIDS recommended removing the legal barriers to syringe access to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, and other blood-borne diseases in New Jersey.

Most States Support Some Form of Syringe Access

Syringe exchange programs exist in about 39 states. Only three states (Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania) require a prescription to purchase a syringe in a pharmacy. New Jersey is the only state in the nation with no access whatsoever to sterile syringes to prevent the spread of diseases.

Conclusion

The time to act is now. New Jersey is losing thousands of lives and millions of dollars to totally preventable diseases. By removing the legal barriers to sterile syringe access, New Jersey will allow those at risk of injection-related diseases to protect their health by purchasing sterile syringes in pharmacies, and untie the hands of doctors and other public health professionals to do the work they are trained and competent to do—prevent the spread of infectious diseases. **The Campaign for a Healthier New Jersey supports New Jersey Senate Bills No. 823 and 494 and Assembly Bills No. 1852 and 2839, which remove the legal barriers to sterile syringe access to prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis C, and other blood-borne diseases.**

New Jersey has the **fifth highest rate of adult HIV, the third highest rate of HIV among children and the highest rate of women infected with HIV in the nation.**

— *New Jersey HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report,*

New Jersey is one of only [three] states that require a prescription for the purchase of a syringe in a pharmacy.

— *Journal of the American Pharmaceutical Association,*
December 2002

Sponsored by Drug Policy Alliance New Jersey

16 West Front Street, Suite 101A, Trenton, NJ 08608 • Phone: 609-396-8613 • Fax: 609-396-9478

Email: nj@drugpolicy.org