



Colorado Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

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May 13, 2024

The Honorable Mark Aliff
President
Pueblo City Council
1 City Hall Place
Pueblo, CO 81003

Re: COSAM's Opposition to Proposed City Ordinance Prohibiting Syringe Service Programs (SSPs)

Dear Councilmember Aliff,

On behalf of the Colorado Society of Addiction Medicine (COSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Colorado specializing in the prevention and treatment of addiction, **we write today to express our opposition to a proposed city ordinance that would prohibit syringe service programs (SSPs) in Pueblo.** With the overdose epidemic significantly impacting individuals and communities across Colorado, we feel that this proposal is a step backwards. SSPs play an essential role to protect public health, minimize drug-related harm, and reduce the burden of infectious disease on individuals and communities.

SSPs are proven harm reduction programs that are supported under state law.¹ SSPs distribute safe materials to people who use drugs. These materials include syringes, medical supplies, and naloxone. SSPs also provide educational resources and linkages to treatment for individuals with addiction. Indeed, research has indicated that those who participate in SSPs are more likely to seek treatment and stop using drugs as a result.²

SSPs are linked to many other positive public health outcomes. Considerable research demonstrates that the operation of SSPs greatly reduces the spread of bloodborne infections, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).^{3 4} Beyond the capability to combat viral infections, SSPs also provide other noticeable benefits to the wider community. SSPs provide safe disposal for used syringes,⁵ promoting the protection of first responders and the public at-large. Further, SSPs often partner with local law enforcement to distribute naloxone to help reduce fatal overdoses in the community.⁶ Finally, studies suggest that SSPs have no impact on violent crime rates in surrounding areas. In fact, research has shown that there is no difference in crime rates between neighborhoods with SSPs when compared to neighborhoods without them.^{7 8}

We commend the council for their commitment to addressing drug use and the overdose epidemic. **However, this proposal to prohibit SSPs in Pueblo is misguided and will inadvertently harm persons with addiction and the community at large.** The truth is that SSPs play a vital role in responding to the public health crisis and reducing the harm experienced by individuals and communities. **As such, we strongly oppose this proposal and request that it not move forward.**

Thank you for the opportunity to express our view. Please contact our leadership if you have any questions or concerns. We are happy to serve as a resource.

Sincerely,

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CC: The Honorable Heather Graham
The Honorable Regina Maestri
The Honorable Joe Latino
The Honorable Sarah Martinez
The Honorable Roger Gomez
The Honorable Dennis Flores
The Honorable Charles
Hernandez

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- ¹ O'Neill Institute. (2023). *Colorado: 2023 HEP ELIMINATION JURISDICTION ASSESSMENTS*. https://oneill.law.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/HEP_-_ElimiNATION_CO_P1.pdf
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- ³ Bernard, C. L., Owens, D. K., Goldhaber-Fiebert, J. D., & Brandeau, M. L. (2017). Estimation of the cost-effectiveness of HIV prevention portfolios for people who inject drugs in the United States: A model-based analysis. *PLOS Medicine*, 14(5). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002312>
- ⁴ Platt, L., Minozzi, S., Reed, J., Vickerman, P., Hagan, H., French, C., Jordan, A., Degenhardt, L., Hope, V., Hutchinson, S., Maher, L., Palmateer, N., Taylor, A., Bruneau, J., & Hickman, M. (2017). Needle syringe programmes and opioid substitution therapy for preventing hepatitis C transmission in people who inject drugs. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2017(9). <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.cd012021.pub2>
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- ⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). *Summary of Information on The Safety and Effectiveness of Syringe Services Programs (SSPs)*. <https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/syringe-services-programs-summary.html>
- ⁷ Marx, M., Crape, B., & Brookmeyer, B. (2000). Trends in crime and the introduction of a needle exchange program. *American Journal of Public Health*, 90(12), 1933–1936. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.90.12.1933>
- ⁸ Galea, S., Ahern, J., Fuller, C., Freudenberg, N., & Vlahov, D. (2001). Needle exchange programs and experience of violence in an inner city neighborhood. *JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, 28(3), 282–288. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00042560-200111010-00014>