



Idaho Safer Syringe Programs

2020 Annual Summary

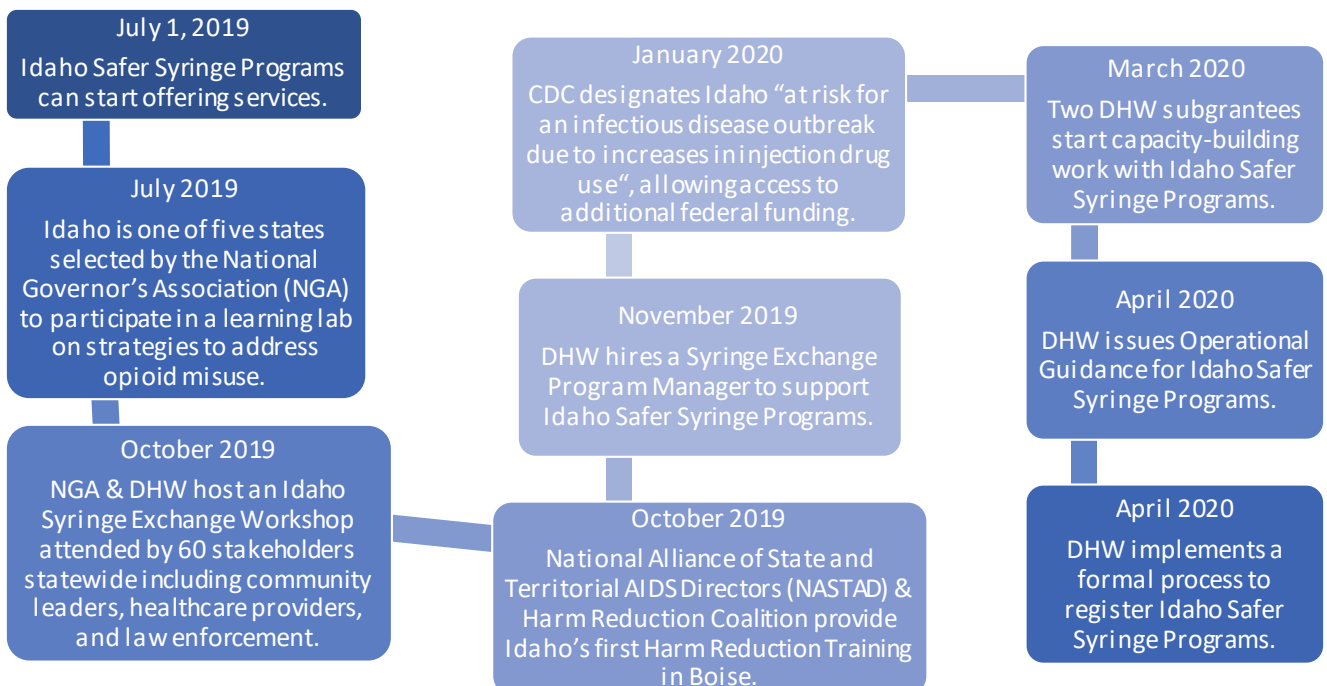
Safer Syringe Programs

Idahoans have a proud tradition of doing what works and what makes sense. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) is taking this practical approach to address problems related to opioid misuse. The misuse of prescription opioid medications is a problem in Idaho and there is a related increase in use of opioid street drugs like heroin, which is often injected. As a result, there are more discarded used needles and syringes in Idaho communities. The public safety workforce has reported finding increasing numbers of used syringes discarded in trash, in public places, or when searching individuals or property. This puts public safety workers and the general public at increased risk of a needlestick injury.

The problem of opioid misuse is complex. Idaho is putting energy into preventing substance misuse and expanding treatment options for people with substance use disorder. Part of the solution is to provide a way to safely dispose of used syringes and connect individuals to substance use disorder treatment. Safer syringe programs protect people by providing safe disposal of used syringes, which protects the public safety workforce and community members from injury. Safer syringe programs are also places where individuals who inject drugs can go to access sterile syringes, get connected to substance use disorder treatment and health exams.

Milestones

During the 2019 legislative session, the Syringe and Needle Exchange Act (Idaho Code Title 37, Chapter 34) was passed by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Little. As a trusted leader in Idaho, DHW's HIV, STD, and Hepatitis Section stepped up to provide guidance and resources to Idaho Safer Syringe Programs. Below are a list of milestones achieved between July 2019 and April 2020.





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Annual Survey

In May 2020, the HIV, STD, and Hepatitis Section conducted a survey of Idaho Safer Syringe Programs. Between July 1, 2019 and April 30, 2020 three Safer Syringe Programs were operating and served at least 150 Idahoans.

Services offered at Idaho's Safer Syringe Programs include:



Safe syringe disposal
& access to
sterile syringes



Connection to
substance use
disorder
treatment



Opioid overdose
reversal
medications
(naloxone)



HIV and viral
hepatitis testing,
STD testing,
condoms



Housing
assistance,
food banks

Safety & Prevention Outcomes



Fewer contaminated needles in circulation

55,730 syringes safely disposed of / 64,623 sterile syringes provided (Return Ratio 1.16). *



Connection to treatment

At least 50 Idahoans accepted a referral to a substance use disorder treatment program. †



Lives saved

At least 13 opioid overdose deaths were prevented with naloxone provided by the program. †



More access to health screenings

750 people were screened for HIV / 150 people screened for hepatitis C.
5 people tested positive and were linked to healthcare.

"Our program is serving at least 20 new participants month after month. This tells us there is a huge need for services in our community."

– Safer Syringe Program in Boise

A mother whose adult daughter was accessing our services thanked us for helping keep her daughter safe. When she said, "You can't love the addiction out of them" I agreed and responded, "but could you imagine trying to fight addiction without the love and support of your family?" Her daughter is now in treatment for substance use disorder.

– Story shared by a Safer Syringe Program outreach worker

* Return Ratio: Syringes provided divided by syringes collected. The number of syringes provided translates to 1-2 safe injections per day per program participant over a ten-month time period.

† This estimate is likely low since programs did not use standard data collection methods at first. DHW has now adopted software to standardize data.

Program Contact

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