

Memorandum

To: Michigan Syringe Services Programs

From: Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Viral Hepatitis Unit

Subject: Mail-Based Harm Reduction Service Delivery

The continuity of harm reduction services during the COVID-19 pandemic are critical for sustained service delivery to Michigan's most vulnerable populations for the prevention of infectious disease transmission and overdose deaths. As a result of the pandemic, syringe services programs (SSPs) have adapted their service delivery to include:

- Social distancing measures
- Changes in distribution models
- Reduced staffing and minimized contact to ensure staff and client safety
- Emphasis on the provision of sterile injection supplies and naloxone

While offering delivery services during the pandemic, SSPs have seen an increase in new participants and overall utilization. These efforts are perhaps more important now than ever as [the state is seeing widespread increase in both non-fatal and fatal accidental drug poisonings](#).

Distribution of harm reduction supplies is specifically authorized by [MCL 333.7457 \(f\)](#). Federal law permits the use of the United States Postal Service to mail controlled substance paraphernalia, including syringes, when authorized by state law. [21 USC 863](#).

The mail-based harm reduction service delivery model aims to reduce the transmission of infectious diseases, prevent overdose deaths, and save the lives of people who use drugs. Mail-based delivery can expand a program's reach, addressing the potential limitations of fixed-site SSP models. Mail-based service delivery platforms can address client concerns related to stigma or fear when visiting a fixed-site model, lack of transportation, and can bridge gaps in rural areas where accessibility to SSPs may be difficult due to geographic distance. Sites interested in adopting the mail-based harm reduction service delivery model may need to consider alternative solutions to address the needs of individuals who may be homeless or in transient living where mail-based service delivery may not be feasible. Agencies should consider how *clients* might be educated and protected from local ordinances regarding the possession of drug paraphernalia (e.g., registering the client as a client of the SSP).

If you have any questions, please contact the MDHHS Viral Hepatitis Unit by e-mail at MDHHS-SyringeAccess@Michigan.gov or by telephone at 517-335-8165.

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