

Help Increase Access to Sterile Syringes

41% of all people living with HIV/AIDS in Massachusetts were exposed to HIV infection either through their own injection drug use or the injection drug use of their sex partner. Massachusetts has the ninth highest HIV infection rate related to injection drug use in the nation. Injection drug use is also the single most significant factor for contracting hepatitis C, which is the leading indicator for liver transplantation. **There is consensus in the medical and scientific communities that increasing access to sterile syringes through pharmacy sales and broad availability of needle exchange is a proven and critical tool in reducing HIV and hepatitis C transmission rates.**

The goal of the Massachusetts Campaign for Responsible Syringe Policy is to decrease the number of new HIV and hepatitis C infections due to the sharing of used syringes by increasing access to sterile syringes. This goal can be accomplished through allowing the purchase of syringes through pharmacies without a prescription, by decriminalizing the possession of syringes, by increasing the number of needle exchange programs in the state, or any combination of the three.

A number of pharmacy access and needle exchange bills will be heard before the Joint Committee on Health Care on January 28th, 2004 at 10:00 at the State House.

How can you help?

1. Attend the January 28th hearing to show your support. It is important that we have a large turn-out of supporters of this legislation.
2. Visit your legislators after the hearing on January 28th. The Campaign will provide you with information to share with your legislators.
3. Contact your legislators if you are unable to attend the hearing in person. All legislators need to hear from their constituents that this legislation is necessary!
4. Visit AIDS Action's website to contact your legislators and to learn more (www.aac.org). Or contact Alison Kirchgasser at AIDS Action at 617-450-1203.