



Case Study – Pittsburgh, PA: Prevention Point Pittsburgh

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AIDS Free Pittsburgh

- Prevention Point Pittsburgh (PPP) is a member organization of the AIDS Free Pittsburgh collaborative
- Pittsburgh is the only city in Pennsylvania (PA) to be designated as a Fast-Track City
- PPP is proud to be presenting our case study here, and excited to continue working alongside the City of Pittsburgh, Mayor Ed Gainey, Pittsburgh HIV Commission and the rest of the AIDS Free Pittsburgh collaborative to reach the 95-95-95 goals in Pittsburgh by 2030

Prevention Point Pittsburgh (PPP)

- PPP is a nonprofit organization operating with a harm reduction approach, dedicated to providing health empowerment services to people who use drugs
- PPP's mission is to promote and advocate for the reduction of harms associated with injection and other forms of drug use, and to reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, other blood-borne infections, and overdose
- PPP operates a syringe service program as well as a medical clinic that primarily provides buprenorphine prescribing

Harm Reduction Framework - Goals

- Harm reduction aims to reduce the negative health, social, and economic consequences related to higher-risk behaviors
- Goals include
 - Increased health and wellbeing for individuals and community
 - Reduced isolation and stigma
 - Safer drug use
 - Reduced drug use and/or abstinence (if aligned with an individual's goals)
 - Increased trust and improved engagement with service providers

Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) – one Harm Reduction intervention

- In addition to sterile syringes and other injection works, SSPs provide increased access to naloxone and fentanyl test strips
- Benefits of SSPs are supported by decades of research:
 - Rates of HIV and Hepatitis C shown to decrease by about 30%
 - SSPs in combination with medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) reduce HIV and HCV transmission by over 66%
 - Decreased overdose death rates
 - Increased utilization of drug treatment services – people who use drugs (PWUD) using SSPs are 5x more likely to enter treatment program and 3x more likely to stop injecting drugs

Despite all these benefits, backed by decades of research... SSPs are illegal in PA!

- 34 states either explicitly permit SSPs or have no laws prohibiting. PA is the only state in the northeast US that does not legally permit SSPs
- Prevention Point Pittsburgh and Prevention Point Philadelphia (no relation!) operate under local County ordinances on opposite sides of the state, and are the only two legally operating SSPs in the state
- Pennsylvania has third highest overdose death rate in US, and ninth highest rate of new HIV infection

PPP's History

- Founded in 1995 by James Crow and Caroline Acker – card table on the corner *every* Sunday morning, regardless of weather, holidays, etc.
 - Police tolerated at first, but as more people came, got complaints from neighbors and businesses
 - Community meetings, advocacy from participants and community members led to Allegheny County Council passing ordinance
- PPP opened first County-sanctioned SSP site in 2002
- Began naloxone distribution program in 2005
- Received 501(c)(3) non-profit status in 2005

Where we are now

- Operate five weekly SSP sites within the City of Pittsburgh
- We expect to distribute 1.5 million syringes in 2022, up from 1.4 million in 2021 (approx. 1 mil in 2020; 665k in 2019)
- Distributing fentanyl test strips since 2017, safer smoking and snorting supplies since 2018
- Began piloting mobile medical services in October 2020; now see approximately 100 patients per week for buprenorphine (Suboxone) prescribing, wound care, antibiotic and OTC medication dispensing, and general health consultations
- Statewide naloxone mailing program (partnership with NEXT Distro) started in April 2020; on average we mail over 1,100 doses of naloxone per month

Advocacy Goals

- Statewide legalization of SSPs
 - Over 1.5 million Pennsylvanians reside outside of the two counties where SSPs are legal
 - In Allegheny County, where PPP operates ordinance requires a lengthy approval process through local municipality to open new sites. Currently all sites in City of Pittsburgh (but County has over 100 municipalities). Working toward opening first location outside of City, but it's slow
- Removing syringes (and other injection works and smoking supplies) from drug paraphernalia law
 - Pittsburgh police generally allow people who received sterile supplies from us to keep them without arrest, but not always, and other municipalities don't
- Eventually more safe injection sites like the ones in New York and Vancouver

