

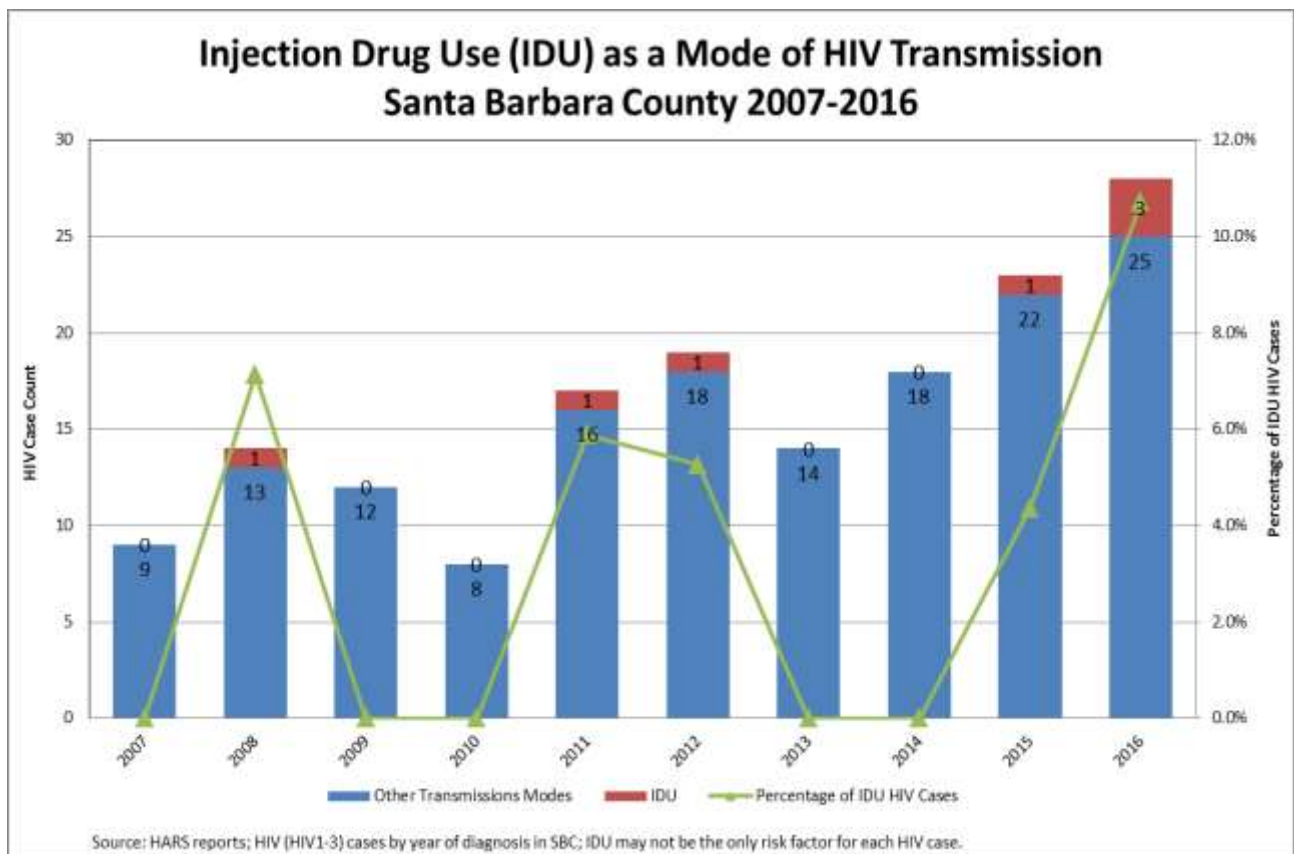
2015-16 Syringe Exchange Program Report Santa Barbara County Public Health Department

Introduction

The Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) was authorized by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors in 2000 to reduce the spread of HIV and other blood-borne diseases through needle sharing. In 1997 a report to Congress concluded that syringe or needle exchange programs can be a highly effective component of a comprehensive strategy to prevent HIV and other infectious diseases.¹ The National Institutes of Health Consensus Panel on HIV Prevention found that SEP can produce reductions in risk behavior as high as 80%, with estimates of a 30% or greater reduction of HIV among injection drug users.²

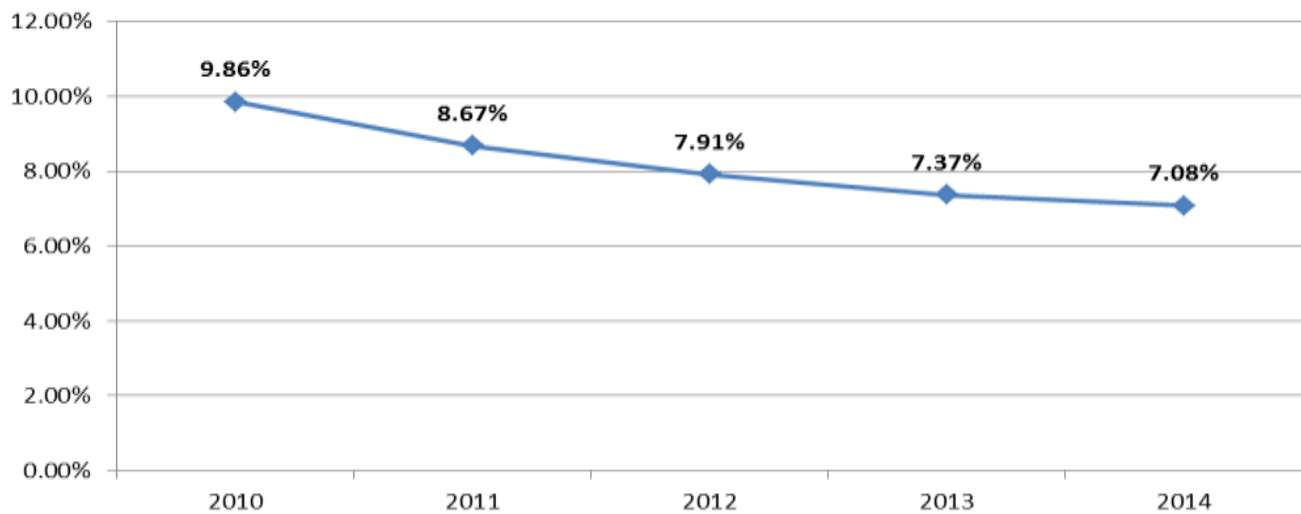
Injection Drug Use and HIV Transmission

The graph below shows the percentage of new AIDS cases in Santa Barbara County each year between 2007 and 2016 that indicated injection drug use (IDU) as a risk factor. The percentage of HIV/AIDS infections with IDU as a risk factor declined overall between 2007 and 2014, but has begun to increase since 2015.



As noted: Intravenous Drug Use may not be the only risk factor in the individuals that have been recently diagnosed with HIV in our County.

Percentage of newly diagnosed HIV patients reporting IDU as a risk factor, California 2010-2014.



* Source: CDPH Office of AIDS

California newly diagnosed HIV patients have been steadily decreasing over this 5 year period. Rates of decline are approximately 7/10 of a percentage decrease each year. California risk factor data is not available for 2015 or 2016 at this time.

Syringe Exchange Program Data

Pacific Pride Foundation operates *The Right Outfit* Syringe Exchange Program through its two fixed locations in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria and a recently added a mobile location in Lompoc to resume services in November of 2016. Program staff at all three locations provide; risk management and harm reduction education, substance abuse counseling, HIV and Hepatitis C testing, needed referrals, in addition to 1-1 exchange of new syringes for contaminated ones. Additionally, there are bilingual English and Spanish speaking employees at all three locations. The program is supported entirely by private funds.

Program staff collected data on the number of syringes collected and distributed, client characteristics, and services provided during each visit. The following information was collected during 2015-16:

- 420 unique clients, 236 in South County and 184 in North County, participated in the program.
- 63% of clients were male, 36% female, and <1% female to male transgender with an average age of 41.
- 50% of clients identified as Caucasian, 36% as Hispanic/Latino, 5% as American Indian, 3% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% as African American, and 3% as Other
- 1,506 exchanges were completed, 740 in South County and 669 in North County
- 100,007 sterile syringes were distributed and 103,680 contaminated syringes were collected and properly disposed of, reducing the number of used syringes on the street by 3,673.
- In June 2016 an opioid overdose prevention program was implemented and 28 clients were educated and received overdose medication to block the effects of opioids. These 28 clients have reported 15 lives saved with overdose medication.

The following program impacts were noted:

- 100% of clients were offered HIV and/or Hepatitis C testing
- 100% of our unique clients were referred for additional STI testing
- 100% were provided with IDU-specific harm reduction educational materials, HIV, Hep C, and Sexually Transmitted Infection educational materials, and biohazard containers
- 71% were referred to substance abuse counseling services

- 27% of our unique clients were referred directly to mental health services

The following client stories illustrate the impact of the SEP on a personal level:

A Hispanic woman in her late 20s has been a consistent weekly exchange client for over two years. One day she came in and proudly informed the staff that today she was just disposing and not exchanging. She happily announced that she was pregnant and with the help of staff enrolled in a perinatal recovery program. Staff saw the client months later when providing education and testing at the recovery program. After the client tested with us at the program, she thanked the Syringe Exchange Program for keeping her and her baby from contracting HIV and Hepatitis C.

Conclusions

The Syringe Exchange Program saves lives and promotes individual and community health by reducing the transmission of HIV, Hepatitis C, and other blood-borne pathogens. Additionally, the Syringe Exchange Program provides hundreds of clients, many of whom are homeless or low income, with risk management and harm reduction education, substance abuse and mental health counseling, HIV and Hepatitis C testing, and referrals for food, shelter, medical care, and other needs. The needle exchange program (*The Right Outfit*) is entirely supported with private funding, the program is a highly cost-effective method for reducing HIV, Hepatitis C, and other blood-borne infections, and the related treatment costs, among one of the highest risk populations in Santa Barbara County.

In 2017, we're looking forward to continuing to expand the Syringe Exchange Program through our new mobile Health Utility Vehicle. Pacific Pride has now established a weekly mobile syringe exchange in the city of Lompoc.

¹ Shalala, DE. *Needle Exchange Programs in America: Review of Published Studies and Ongoing Research*. Report to the Committee on Appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. February 18, 1997

² National Institutes of Health. Consensus Development Statement. Interventions to prevent HIV risk behaviors, February 11-13, 1997:7-8.