



CALIFORNIA  
HIV / AIDS POLICY  
RESEARCH CENTERS

**Release**

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## **Safer Drug Consumption Programs as HIV Prevention**

*Exploring the Intersection of the HIV and Opioid Epidemics*

LOS ANGELES — Proposed legislation in California Assembly Bill 186 seeks to implement safer drug consumption sites in locations throughout California. These sites provide supervision by trained personnel, offer safe and sterilized equipment, and safely link people to medical care and substance use treatment. Advocates believe this intervention is crucial to begin addressing the increased intravenous drug use (IDU) resulting from the opioid epidemic. Given that the risk factors presented by the opioid epidemic and increased IDU overlap substantially with risk factors associated with higher rates of HIV transmission, a policy brief published by the Southern California HIV/AIDS Policy Research Center clarifies the state of research pertaining to both epidemics. It identifies Californians that are impacted by and at greater risk of both IDU and HIV and reviews research evidence for how safer drug consumption sites may be a key HIV prevention tool.

Key findings include:

- In 2015, California saw over 4,700 new cases of HIV and led the nation for HIV transmissions via injection drug use (IDU) and among men who have sex with men who inject drugs (MSM/IDU).
- Other key groups impacted by both epidemics include women, people of color, those who are homeless and youth. Research has found that people who inject drugs from these subgroups are 4-29 times more likely to have an HIV-positive diagnosis.

- Safer drug consumption sites offer supervision by trained personnel, safe and sterilized equipment, and safely link people to medical care and substance use treatment thereby reducing risk and incidence of HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV) infection.
- Safer drug consumption sites can help to facilitate continuity of care for both addiction and HIV among people living with HIV who use drugs.
- In California, researchers have estimated that a single safe injection site in San Francisco could prevent 3.3 new HIV transmissions per year and would save the State of California roughly \$3.5 million per year in expenses related to healthcare, emergency services and crime.

Author, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs student Robert Gamboa shared, "Evidence shows that the HIV and Opioid epidemics dangerously intersect. Because of this relationship, the evolving frontier of HIV prevention must consider implementing safer drug consumption sites as an effective strategy. This intervention has the potential to prevent the further spread of HIV and other blood borne diseases while also saving lives from opioid overdose."

In California, San Francisco recently joined Seattle and Philadelphia in implementing safer drug consumption sites in their jurisdiction. Prior research documents evidence for leveraging safer drug consumption sites as an effective HIV prevention strategy. Should state legislation fail to clear the way for California to implement the strategy state-wide, research supports the inclusion of broad HIV prevention and treatment services at local sites. To access the full report, visit [www.chprc.org](http://www.chprc.org).

#### **ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA HIV/AIDS POLICY RESEARCH CENTERS**

The California HIV/AIDS Policy Research Centers are funded by the California HIV/AIDS Research Program to bring the most relevant and timely evidence to bear on HIV/AIDS policy making in order to further California's efforts to develop and maintain efficient, cost-effective, and accessible programs and services to people with or at risk for HIV/AIDS.