



FACT SHEET

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH, OFFICE OF AIDS SYRINGE SERVICES AUTHORIZATION PROGRAM

April 2022

Syringe services programs (SSPs) have been operating in California since the late 1980s, providing sterile syringes, collecting used ones, and acting as a point of access to health care and help for people who inject drugs.

As part of California's efforts to prevent the spread of HIV and other blood-borne diseases, California [Health and Safety \(H&S\) Code Section 121349](#) outlines **two mechanisms** by which an SSP may be authorized to operate.

1. SSPs may be authorized by county or city government; and/or
2. Programs may be authorized by the California Department of Public Health, Office of AIDS (CDPH/OA) in any location where the department determines that the conditions exist for rapid spread of HIV, viral hepatitis, or other blood-borne diseases.

Additionally, California Business and Professions Code Section 4145.5 permits physicians and pharmacists to furnish or sell an unlimited number of hypodermic needles and syringes to adults age 18 and older.

The CDPH/OA SEP Certification Program

Under California H&S Code Section 121349:

- Applicants may apply directly to CDPH/OA for authorization, rather than to their local county or city government.

- Applications must meet minimal requirements to be considered. These include a list of basic services that must be provided (including, but not limited to referrals to drug treatment and mental health programs), sufficient funding to provide the services and capacity to collect required data.
- Once the Department determines that an application meets these requirements and deems the applicant provisionally appropriate CDPH/OA must post information about the application on its website and a 45-day public comment period begins.
- During this period CDPH/OA must consult with local law enforcement and the local health officer of the proposed location.
- After the 45-day public comment period, CDPH/OA has 30 business days in which to make the decision.
- SSP certification is granted for two years. Before the end of the two-year period, the Department may reauthorize the program in consultation with the local health officer and local law enforcement leadership.

[Additional information](#) about the CDPH/OA Syringe Exchange Certification Program and about access to sterile syringes in California is available at the CDPH/Office of AIDS website at: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/Pages/OA_prev_sep.aspx.