



ARKANSAS

1. Plan Development

Arkansas has not yet published a new viral hepatitis elimination plan. The state is expected to publish a plan by 2025 in accordance with funding received through CDC PS21-2103. If Arkansas has not already done so, the state should convene a group of multi-disciplinary stakeholders, similar to those who helped to develop the state's 2014 HCV epidemiological profile, to develop a new comprehensive plan to guide efforts to improve its viral hepatitis strategies and outcomes. This process can help identify capacity needs, build collaborative partnerships to pool limited resources, and create targeted interventions to reduce viral hepatitis incidence.

2. Harm Reduction Laws

Syringe Services Program Legality, Syringe Exchange Specifications, Medical Emergency Laws, and "Works" Possession Laws and Syringe Exemption

SSPs have not been legalized in Arkansas, and the possession of substance use/injection drug use equipment is illegal, yet there is at least one community-based program that offers syringe services. Improved harm reduction policies that include allowing SSPs to be established will aid state efforts to engage with key populations at greatest risk for viral hepatitis transmission. There are laws in place to protect Good Samaritans who attempt to assist others that are experiencing a substance use-related medical emergency, and there are protections in place for the person experiencing the emergency.

3. Budget Allocation

Specific Funds Allocated for Plan Implementation, State Budget, and State Corrections Budget

There was no specific state budget or state correctional budget allocation identified related to viral hepatitis in the state's FY23 budget. While viral hepatitis public health programs may be funded through various budget allocations, a designated line item for hepatitis signals a commitment to providing resources to support ongoing efforts to improve statewide viral hepatitis outcomes.

4. Improving Viral Hepatitis Prevention, Treatment, and Outcomes

Educational and Perinatal Information for the Public, Provider Training, and Medicaid Expansion

Arkansas is a Medicaid expansion state, and it now offers training to providers to increase workforce capacity to treat more people living with viral hepatitis. The state does provide educational information to the public regarding viral hepatitis, but it is limited and refers visitors to the CDC pages for HAV and HBV specifically. Arkansas does not provide information pertaining to perinatal HBV or HCV. The state's site does not indicate state-specific resources for testing or prevention. Educational materials that provide information and resources tailored for state residents, such as local testing locations, are more likely to engage people to seek care.

Standard of Care for HCV in State Corrections

A publicly available, separate, state-drafted guidance for the standard of care for HCV in state corrections does not exist in Arkansas. There also has not been litigation in Arkansas regarding proper guidance for treatment of HCV in corrections.

Targeted Interventions for Key Populations and the Provision of Linguistically Diverse Informational Materials

Some non-governmental programs / community organizations are providing targeted interventions to expand access to viral hepatitis for key populations, such as persons who use drugs and those experiencing homelessness, but there are no jurisdiction-led interventions providing this work.

Enduring Coalition / Task Force to Coordinate and Leverage Resources

We are not aware of an enduring Coalition or task force in existence that includes state agencies, community organizations, and advocacy groups to coordinate activities and leverage resources. If it has not already begun to do so, Arkansas should convene stakeholders across various disciplines to form a Coalition that can help build partnership, identify needs, leverage available resources, and further implement targeted interventions.

Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access Grade

There are still significant restrictions on HCV treatment in place in Arkansas. Arkansas is the only state Medicaid program that imposes a minimum fibrosis requirement. The Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access grade remains an F.

5. Improving Viral Hepatitis Surveillance and Data Usage

Epidemiological Report / Profile, and Public-Facing Website with Viral Hepatitis Data

Arkansas has made significant improvements in its reporting of viral hepatitis epidemiological data since July 2022. On its public-facing website, it now includes comprehensive hepatitis profiles for HAV, HBV, and HCV in the state that include cases, trends, demographics, and other resources.