HEPELIMI**NATION**

MARYLAND

1. Plan Development

Maryland's 2019 Hepatitis C Strategic Plan has lapsed. It should be noted that a 2022-2030 Elimination Plan Framework has been published, so this is a step in the right direction in terms of the development of a new viral hepatitis elimination plan. The state is expected to publish a viral hepatitis plan by 2025 in accordance with CDC PS21-2103.

2. Harm Reduction Laws

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

Although SSPs are authorized by law in Maryland and there is an exemption in place for the possession of syringes acquired from SSPs, the state's health code implies that a 1-for-1 exchange is required by SSP participants. The state should consider clarifying its syringe exchange laws so that SSPs explicitly function under the needs-based model. A needs-based SSP policy would broaden the efficacy of these programs to reduce transmission of hepatitis, HIV, and other diseases.

3. Budget Allocation

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

Viral hepatitis is mentioned only in the state's FY24 proposed budget, but nothing further. A designated line item for hepatitis would signal 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

Maryland is a Medicaid expansion state and provides educational information to the public regarding viral hepatitis, but it fails to provide information geared toward the public pertaining to perinatal HBV and HCV. Maryland Community-Based Programs to Test and Cure Hepatitis C is an initiative to reduce hepatitis C virus (HCV) related morbidity and mortality. Administered by the Maryland Department of Health and the Baltimore City Health Department, in collaboration with a coalition of clinical and public health partners, this initiative addresses two critical problems related to HCV care: 1) A high burden of undiagnosed and untreated HCV infection in HIV/HCV co-infected and HCV mono-infected populations; and 2) An insufficient number of HCV services providers offering care to successfully keep up with demand. There is a clinician training and videoconference program that has been implemented by the Division of Infectious Diseases at Johns Hopkins University.

Standard of Care for HCV in State Corrections

Litigation was filed against the state in January 2019 for denying HCV treatment in state corrections. The outcome of that litigation is unclear. Additionally, guidance provided in the prior plan was not aligned with the AASLD / IDSA treatment recommendations for persons in prison.

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

It is not clear whether the state still provides support for targeted interventions for key populations.

Enduring Coalition / Task Force to Coordinate and Leverage Resources

Through the creation of the 2022-2030 Elimination Plan Framework, it seems that a Coalition / task force is working together to coordinate activities and leverage resources.

Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access Grade

The Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access grade given to Maryland has remained a C since July 2022. It can improve its current C score by removing the prior authorization requirement and/or other restrictions still in place.

5. Improving Viral Hepatitis Surveillance and Data Usage

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

The state developed and published a detailed epidemiology profile in 2021 that covers 2015-2019 and includes HAV, HBV, and HCV data. The state should consider publishing a report that includes more recent data and ensure that this data (and the report) is easily accessible through the state's (or the Department of Public Health's) public-facing website.