



# RHODE ISLAND

## 1. Plan Development

In 2022, Rhode Island published an HCV elimination plan and has incorporated several strategies into the plan to monitor progress of certain elimination metrics on an annual basis. The plan does not specify whether people with lived/living experience played a role in the development of the plan. The state should take steps to integrate strategies to address HAV and HBV into its elimination plan.

## 2. Harm Reduction Laws

### **Syringe Services Program Legality, Syringe Exchange Specifications, Medical Emergency Laws, and “Works” Possession Laws and Syringe Exemption**

SSPs are authorized by law, but the state should more clearly articulate its syringe exchange laws: there is currently no restriction on the number of syringes, so we can assume SSPs function on an “as-needed” approach, but a revision could make the needs-based policy more explicit. A needs-based SSP policy would broaden the efficacy of these programs to reduce transmission of hepatitis, HIV, and other diseases. Additionally, there is an exemption for the possession of syringes by SSP participants. The law is unclear regarding any existing exemptions for other substance use ‘works’ or paraphernalia.

## 3. Budget Allocation

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

Viral hepatitis is only mentioned in the FY23 corrections budget, but it is not mentioned elsewhere. 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**

Rhode Island is a Medicaid expansion state and does provide educational information to the public regarding viral hepatitis, but the state does not provide information pertaining to perinatal HBV or HCV. The state does not direct health professionals to training resources to improve awareness and capacity to screen for and treat viral hepatitis. At a minimum, the state should consider including training programs such as Hepatitis B Online and Hepatitis C Online.

### **Standard of Care for HCV in State Corrections**

Rhode Island's elimination plan includes strategies / guidance to offer DAA treatment for HCV to all persons with a confirmed HCV diagnosis held in state corrections in accordance with the AASLD/ IDSA treatment guidelines.

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

Rhode Island has implemented several innovative approaches to advance hepatitis elimination and harm reduction efforts. Some noteworthy achievements include passing legislation to establish safe injection sites, establishing onsite HCV screening and treatment at methadone facilities, and installing harm reduction vending machines at community locations and correctional facilities.

### **Enduring Coalition / Task Force to Coordinate and Leverage Resources**

The Rhode Island Hepatitis Action Coalition (RIHAC) is a statewide community planning group co-chaired by medical directors from the RIDOH and RIEOHHS. RIHAC is composed of 45 multidisciplinary members, such as medical providers, community agencies, individuals with lived experience, academic institutions, and other state agencies, such as the Rhode Island Department of Corrections.

### **Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access Grade**

Rhode Island has maintained its A+ Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access grade.

## **5. Improving Viral Hepatitis Surveillance and Data Usage**

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

Rhode Island previously published a 2020 epidemiological report that included HBV and HCV data, but it has not published a more recent report since then. The state should consider assessing and publishing new data as it becomes available and making it accessible via its public-facing website.