



SOUTH CAROLINA

1. Plan Development

South Carolina has published a viral hepatitis elimination plan that addresses HAV, HBV, and HCV. Yearly progress on the plan will be documented online and shared with partners, and the plan indicates that the South Carolina Viral Hepatitis Committee (VHC) “will continue to recruit, welcome, and support people with lived experience to lead and participate in [its] efforts to improving viral hepatitis outcomes.” Since the VHC created the elimination plan, we gather from this that people with lived experience were included in the plan’s development process.

2. Harm Reduction Laws

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

SSPs are legal in South Carolina but not via a state law expressly authorizing them. Possession of drug paraphernalia is decriminalized across the state. The exchange of syringes operates on a 1-for-1 policy. A needs-based SSP policy would broaden the efficacy of these programs to reduce transmission of hepatitis, HIV, and other diseases. There are Good Samaritan protections in place though to protect those who call 911 to help others or themselves when in need of emergency medical assistance.

3. Budget Allocation

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

It is promising to see that although viral hepatitis was not mentioned in the prior fiscal year’s budget, it is mentioned in the FY23-24 budget. Continuing to designate a 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

South Carolina is not a Medicaid expansion state. The state does provide educational information to the public regarding viral hepatitis, as well as information pertaining to perinatal HBV. No information for perinatal HCV is offered though. It does offer training to providers through its state health department website. It should just ensure the training is easy to locate on the website.

Standard of Care for HCV in State Corrections

Although the plan “encourages organizations to work with local jails, prisons, and justice-involved people to increase access to screening, vaccination, linkage to care, and treatment services,” the plan does not include information that there are strategies in place 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. The plan indicates that “the Policy workgroup will focus on ... developing and implementing a policy” for treatment that aligns with the AASLD/IDSA treatment guidelines. However, there has been litigation within the jurisdiction that has prompted changes to be made regarding hepatitis screening and treatment within correctional facilities. In accordance with the case of *Geissler v. Stirling*, Case No. 4:17-cv-01746-MBS, a settlement agreement was reached in South Carolina in 2020 related to Hepatitis C testing and treatment of all South Carolina Department of Corrections inmates with chronic Hepatitis C. The settlement states that (1) inmates will be offered testing for chronic HCV consistent with the approved Partial Settlement Agreement; (2) all inmates who are diagnosed with Chronic HCV will be evaluated for how severe their illness is and will be assigned an acuity level; and (3) all inmates who are diagnosed with chronic HCV will be provided treatment, including direct-acting antiviral medication.

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

It appears that there are state-sponsored targeted interventions for key populations.

Enduring Coalition / Task Force to Coordinate and Leverage Resources

South Carolina has formed a Viral Hepatitis Committee to develop the state’s forthcoming Viral Hepatitis Elimination Strategic Plan. It was integral in creating the elimination plan and is made up of a large conglomerate of invested stakeholders. This network does include people with lived / living experience.

Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access Grade

South Carolina’s Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access grade has improved from a D to a B following the removal of substance use and prescriber restrictions.

5. Improving Viral Hepatitis Surveillance and Data Usage

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

South Carolina has published HAV data through April 30th, 2022 and posted it on its public-facing website, but there is no other viral hepatitis epidemiological data available. The state should consider assessing and publishing new data as it becomes available and making it accessible via its public-facing website.