



# WEST VIRGINIA

## 1. Plan Development

West Virginia published its HIV and Hepatitis C Elimination Plan in December 2022. The plan addresses strategies to improve health outcomes related to both diseases. People with lived/living experience were included in the plan development process. The plan notes an intent of the task force to monitor the progress of the plan annually and provide data and other progress updates on a publicly accessible, online dashboard.

## 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 in West Virginia, but they operate on a 1-for-1 exchange. Shifting political sentiment against SSPs have reduced the number of SSPs in operation throughout the state, and proposed legislation to impose strict requirements on SSPs further threaten the harm reduction efforts in the state. The state should consider removing the caveat that syringe services programs shall “strive for a one-to-one exchange.” Removing this will allow programs to fully function under a needs-based policy. Additionally, the Good Samaritan Law applicable to people who call for medical assistance because they are experiencing (or believe they are experiencing) a drug overdose only grants immunity ‘if it is the first time the person experiencing a drug overdose is having such drug overdose.’ This is a very limiting immunity, and the state should consider removing it.

## 3. Budget Allocation

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

Viral hepatitis is only mentioned in the FY23 budget for the state of West Virginia, but there is no indication that it will remain in the upcoming fiscal year’s budget. Continuing to include a designated line item for hepatitis, both in the general budget and the corrections budget, 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**

West Virginia is a Medicaid expansion state. The state does provide educational information to the public regarding viral hepatitis, and now provides information pertaining to both perinatal HBV and perinatal HCV (since July 2022). The state offers a provider training program, WVHAMP, to increase the number of HCV treatment providers.

**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 West Virginia. There has been litigation within the jurisdiction though that has prompted changes to be made regarding hepatitis screening and treatment within correctional facilities.

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

There are non-state programs / community organizations providing targeted interventions available for key populations within West Virginia.

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

The Community Education Group recently started the WV Statewide Stakeholder Coalition, a syndemic coalition that includes viral hepatitis. People with lived/living experience are included in this coalition. In addition, the state created the HIV and Hepatitis C Elimination Plan Steering Committee to provide guidance and oversight for the development and implementation of the plan.

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

West Virginia's Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access grade remains at a C. To improve it, the state should remove prior authorization, the substance use counseling requirement, retreatment restrictions, and other restrictions.

## 5. Improving Viral Hepatitis Surveillance and Data Usage

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

West Virginia does not provide regularly updated hepatitis data on its website and has not recently published (within the last two years) any comprehensive epidemiological reports that include hepatitis data.