Oct. 14, 2022: State Advocacy Update

CDC grants will help reduce spread of blood-borne infectious disease

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently announced new, five-year grants designed to “increase access to harm reduction services for people who use drugs (PWUD) and prevent hepatitis C, hepatitis B, HIV, and other infectious diseases associated with injection drug use.”

The grantees, RTI International and the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors, are slated to use the funds to expand access to syringe services programs (SSPs) and help prevent the spread of blood-borne infectious disease.

The AMA strongly encourages state medical associations to consider introducing state legislation modifying drug paraphernalia laws both to protect people who inject drugs by allowing them to purchase and possess needles and syringes without a prescription, and to protect needle exchange program employees from being prosecuted for disseminating syringes. The AMA further encourages modifying restrictive laws and regulations concerning the sale and possession of needles and syringes to maximize the availability of sterile syringes and needles, as well as to continue providing reimbursement for medically necessary needles and syringes.

As detailed in the recent AMA 2022 Overdose Epidemic Report, SSPs are associated with an estimated 50% reduction in HIV and HCV incidence. SSPs also can help serve as a bridge to other health services, including HCV and HIV testing and treatment and medications to treat opioid use disorder. Access to SSPs also means access to naloxone. In addition to providing sterile needles and syringes to help reduce blood borne infections, SSPs distributed more than 700,000 doses of naloxone, including refills, during a 12-month study period that captured the responses of 263 SSPs nationwide.

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