



# Oregon

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## Statement Regarding Sterile Syringe Access and Harm Prevention

There is an opioid, heroin and methamphetamine crisis occurring across Oregon and the US. Evidence shows that access to sterile syringes and naloxone are effective strategies to reduce negative health outcomes and the spread of disease related to injection drug use, including HIV, Hepatitis B and C and overdose. Reuse of syringes is common when new syringes are unavailable; this increases intravenous drug users (IDUs) risk of infections and communicable diseases.

Oregon was the first state to squarely face the question of syringe access as a public health measure. Prior to 1987, syringe sales were not regulated. In that year, the legislature passed a paraphernalia law based on the model statute but heeded the advice of state health officials to explicitly exclude syringes from the definition of paraphernalia ([ORS 475.525\(3\)](#)). In Oregon, it is therefore **legal** to sell syringes not only in pharmacies but also in other retail outlets, and to distribute them free through Syringe Exchange Programs (SEPs) or other mechanisms. Of note, the sale of syringes in Oregon does not require a prescription. However, a pharmacist must use good professional judgment when selling syringes to minors (individuals less than 18 years of age) see [ORS 475.744](#). The Oregon approach has minimized the legal barriers to syringe access.

Public health studies have proven legal syringe access reduces syringe reuse and sharing, does not promote injection drug use, and does not increase criminal activity in surrounding areas. When pharmacies or pharmacists choose to directly or indirectly restrict syringe sales to IDUs, or to not carry naloxone, the opportunity to decrease or prevent individual and community harm from addiction and injection drug use are lost.

The Board recommends and encourages pharmacies and pharmacists to increase access of sterile syringes and naloxone to the public. Pharmacies are important public health partners for infectious disease and drug overdose prevention. Existing laws in Oregon have positioned pharmacies and pharmacists to support public health efforts to increase community member access to sterile syringes and naloxone, deliver health education, and refer IDUs to local health care and recovery services. Removing the stigma of selling sterile syringes and prescribing and dispensing naloxone will improve patient care in the short and long term.