



Portland Public Health Division Needle Exchange Program

Since 2013, the Portland Needle Exchange Program (NEP) has seen an increase in the number of enrollees and exchanges made, due largely in part to an increase in enrollees reporting injecting heroin and synthetic opiates. The rise in opiate use is likely due to several factors including inconsistency in the strength of heroin on the street, stronger opiates like fentanyl affecting tolerance levels, more users switching from prescription opioids, and more users reporting no health insurance.

Table 1. Portland Needle Exchange Program Figures

	CY 2015	CY 2016	CY 2017
Number of enrollees	701	855	948
Number of exchanges	5,291	6,172	6,878
Number of needles exchanged	145,207	167,335	186,189

Source: Public Health Division, Health and Human Services Department, City of Portland.

People who identify as male make up about 60% of the enrollees, with the majority of all enrollees identifying as white/non-hispanic. About 70% of the enrollees report being Hepatitis C positive and about 1% report a positive HIV status. This is consistent with state figures, as Maine has a very low-incidence rate of HIV. 35% of enrollees report being homeless or transient and 85% report having no form of health insurance.

In addition to providing clean needles and injection equipment to active drug users, NEP provides testing for hepatitis C and HIV and makes referrals for hepatitis A and B immunizations, sexually transmitted disease testing, primary care, recovery resources, and mental health case management. Staff distributed over 2,500 doses of naloxone, did over 150 overdose prevention trainings, and NEP clients reversed 291 overdoses from January 1-December 31, 2017.

Table 2 shows the locations and number of trainings provided by Needle Exchange Staff in 2017. Trainings at recovery residences and social service and mental health agencies include training for both staff and overdose education groups for clients and residents.

Table 2. Naloxone and Overdose Response Trainings 2017

Naloxone Trainings 2017	
Location	Number of Trainings
Cumberland County Jail	4
Colleges and Universities	6
Oxford Street Shelter	4
Preble Street	5
Recovery and Treatment Facilities	60
Public Community Trainings	8
Mental Health and Social Service Agencies	37
Local Businesses	4
Maine Medical Partners	20
Portland School Nurses	2

Source: Public Health Division, Health and Human Services Department, City of Portland.