



POSITION PAPER No. 4/212th Legislature (2006-07)

ISSUE:

Establishes the “Blood-Borne Disease Harm Reduction Act” and provides for the establishment of sterile syringe access programs. Permits limited pharmacy sales of syringes and needles without a prescription. A-1852/S494 includes a \$10 million appropriation for inpatient and residential treatment.

BILL NO.

S-494 (Gill, Gormley)

A-1852 (Roberts, Blee, Gusciora, Caraballo, Barnes, Steele)

S-823 (Vitale)

A-2839 (Sires, Caraballo, Gusciora)

NCADD-NJ POSITION:

NCADD–NJ strongly supports A-1852/S494. A syringe access program is in the unique position of being able to reach a population of drug users that may not otherwise seek assistance for their addiction. These bills provide the necessary bridge to drug treatment for these drug users by providing participants with information, referrals, access to drug treatment, and an individualized substance abuse treatment plan when appropriate.

The \$10 million appropriated for inpatient and residential treatment in A-1852/S494, is critical to the success of such a program as well as for individuals whose primary diagnosis is drug abuse.

Some served through this appropriation will be those referred by the syringe access program. Ensuring the availability of drug treatment

services in a syringe exchange service area is no small matter considering the 2001 Department of Health and Senior Services Substance Abuse Task Force Report, which found that half of the state’s adults and two in three of it’s adolescents who seek treatment cannot access treatment when they seek it.

This appropriation, coupled with the requirement that the Commissioner of Health and Senior Services make recommendations for appropriations to ensure there are an adequate number of drug treatment slots to serve the treatment needs of those referred by the syringe access program, will assist in reducing the waiting list and in ensuring more access to treatment for program participants. Any addicted intravenous drug user who is engaged in the services of a needle exchange program and asks for drug treatment should be guaranteed to receive it.

NCADD-NJ agrees that such programs should be operate under strict rules, guidelines, and parameters designed by the state Public Health Council within the Department of Health and Senior Services, so as to avoid confusion of municipally or other-based syringe exchange programs in the state. The bills direct that these guidelines include a requirement to provide educational services and assistance in obtaining addiction treatment. In so doing, it helps to ensure that intravenous drug users not only have clean syringes available but also the necessary programmatic components to address their drug addiction.

Lastly, A-1852/S494 provide for accurate data collection, monitoring, and evaluation of participation rates, including the number of participants who enter addiction treatment as a result of the program and the status of their treatment. NCADD-NJ agrees this is an important component of A-1852/S494.



PUBLIC POLICY & INFORMATION

Promoting Addiction Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Through Advocacy and Education

NCADD-NJ has long maintained that, in addition to HIV/AIDS, there is another progressive, chronic, and potentially fatal disease for the intravenous drug user, that being the disease of addiction. These bills address this disease and may offer the only chance of interrupting it for the intravenous drug user. A-1852/S494 build a strong bridge between the exchange of syringes and the opportunity for addiction treatment and education. A-1852/S494 clearly have not been considered in isolation but instead were developed in the context of a significant public policy dialogue about what the optimum syringe exchange program will look like if permitted in the state

NCADD-NJ supports S-823 and A-2839, particularly in that they limit the number of clean needles that could be purchased without a prescription by anyone 18 years or older and provide that pharmacists disseminate information about addiction treatment. NCADD-NJ believes it is wise to limit the number of syringes that can be purchased without a prescription to reduce the possibility of unregulated “syringe exchange” programs proliferating.

CONTACT

John L. Hulick, MS, CPS
Director of Public Affairs & Policy
609.689.0121 ext. 7009
jhulick@ncaddnj.org

360 Corporate Boulevard
Robbinsville, NJ 08691
609.689.0121 (PH) | 609.689.3244 (FX)
POLICY@NCADDNJ.ORG