

The Intersection of Opioids and Viral Hepatitis – A Public Health Crisis

**Jonathan Mermin, MD, MPH
RADM, USPHS**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention**

**Caring Ambassadors Program
U.S. Senate Briefing
May 18, 2018**

National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention
Office of the Director



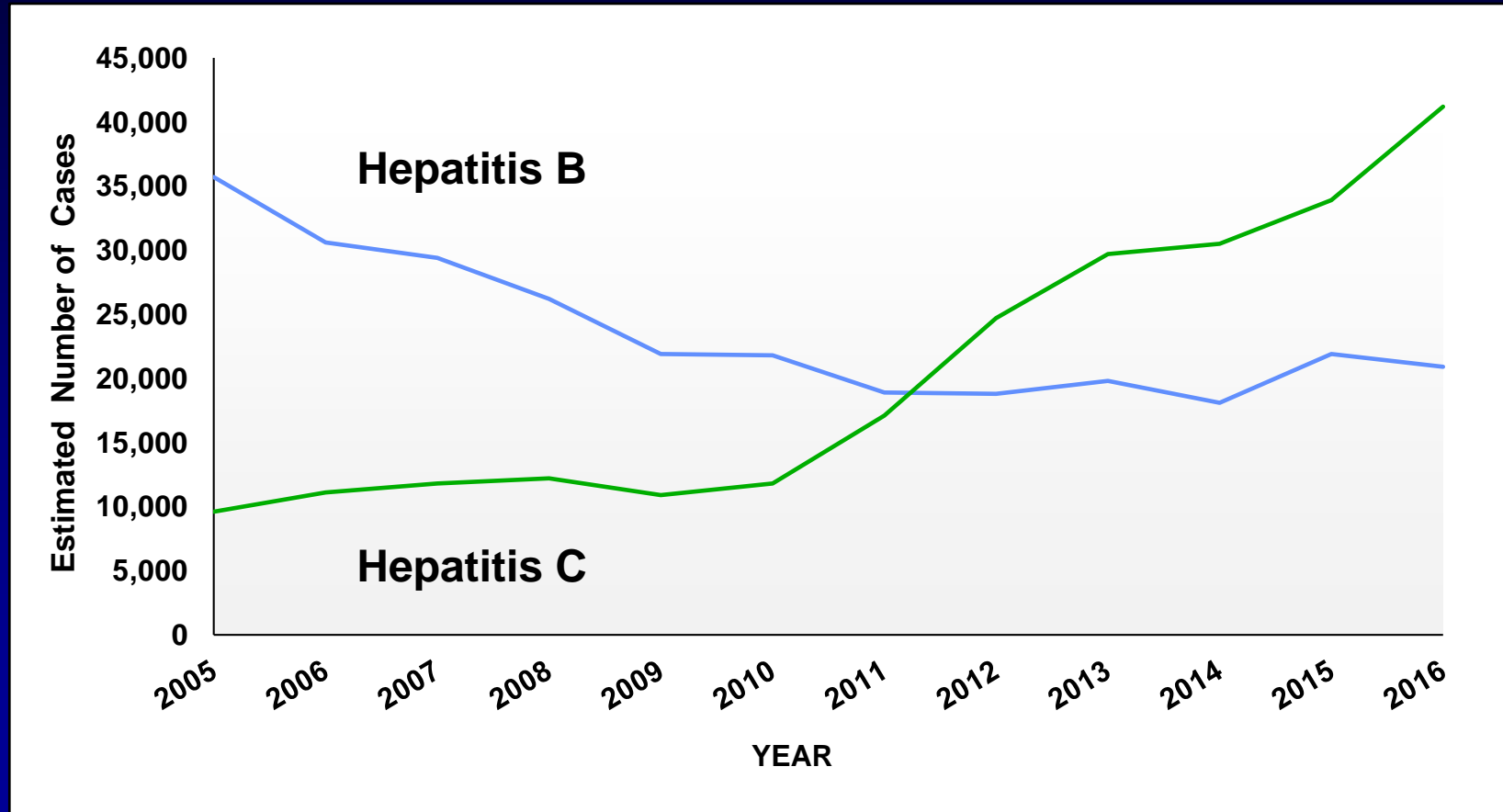
Hepatitis A Outbreaks in Multiple States



- **CDC has been assisting with multiple multi-state hepatitis A outbreaks**
 - Primarily among homeless persons, persons who use injection and non-injection drugs, and their close contacts
 - More than 2,100 cases; 49 deaths
 - Over 1,500 hospitalizations
 - Tested more than 1,600 specimens
- **Major challenge for jurisdictions**

Acute Hepatitis C Infections Continue to Soar

Over 22,000 Americans die of viral hepatitis each year



Increased Transmission of Viral Hepatitis to Infants

- Without preventive treatment, 40% of infants born to HBV-infected mothers will develop chronic infection
 - Without treatment, a quarter will die from liver disease
- From 2009-2014, HCV infection among women giving birth nearly doubled



Protect Your Baby for Life

Hepatitis B and Your Baby



What is Hepatitis B?
"Hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis B is a liver disease that results from infection with the Hepatitis B virus. Some people are able to fight the infection and clear the Hepatitis B virus. For others, the virus remains in their body and becomes a chronic, or lifelong, illness. Over time, Hepatitis B can cause serious health problems.

How serious is Hepatitis B?
As many as 1 in 4 people with Hepatitis B develop serious liver problems including liver damage, liver failure, and even liver cancer. Every year, approximately 3,000 people in the United States die from Hepatitis B-related liver disease.

Prevent Hepatitis B.
Get your baby vaccinated.

How common is Hepatitis B?
It is estimated that 350 million people worldwide and 1.2 million people in the United States are infected with Hepatitis B. For every 1,000 pregnant women that give birth each year, 1 to 2 of them have Hepatitis B.

Are babies at risk for Hepatitis B?
Yes. When a pregnant woman has Hepatitis B it can be spread easily to her baby. Babies and young children can also get Hepatitis B from close contact with family members or others who might be infected. Infants who become infected with Hepatitis B have a 90% chance of developing a lifelong, chronic infection.

Are pregnant women tested for Hepatitis B?
Yes. Many women do not know they are infected, since people with Hepatitis B often have no symptoms. As a result, all pregnant women are given a blood test for Hepatitis B as part of their prenatal care. The test is usually performed during the first prenatal visit. If a woman has not received prenatal care, then she will be tested at the hospital before she delivers her baby.

Why are women tested for Hepatitis B?
Pregnant women are routinely tested for Hepatitis B, along with other diseases. These tests are done to find health problems that can be prevented or treated in both a woman and her baby.

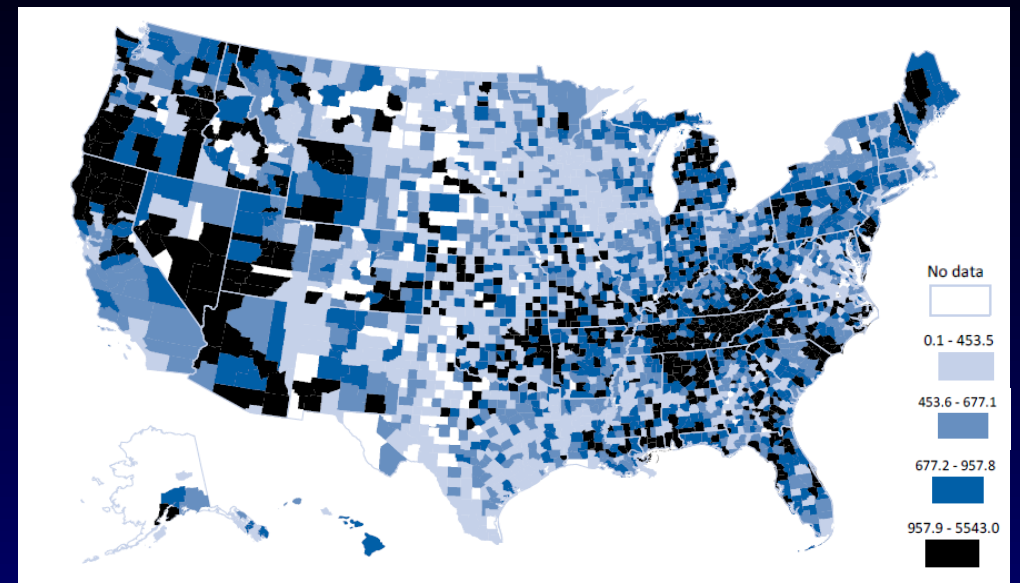
Why should pregnant women be concerned about Hepatitis B?
Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease that can be easily passed from a pregnant woman to her baby at birth. Fortunately, there is a vaccine to prevent babies from getting Hepatitis B.

How is Hepatitis B spread?
Hepatitis B is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluids from a person with the Hepatitis B virus enter the body of someone who is not infected. The virus is very infectious and is easily spread to others. This can happen through:

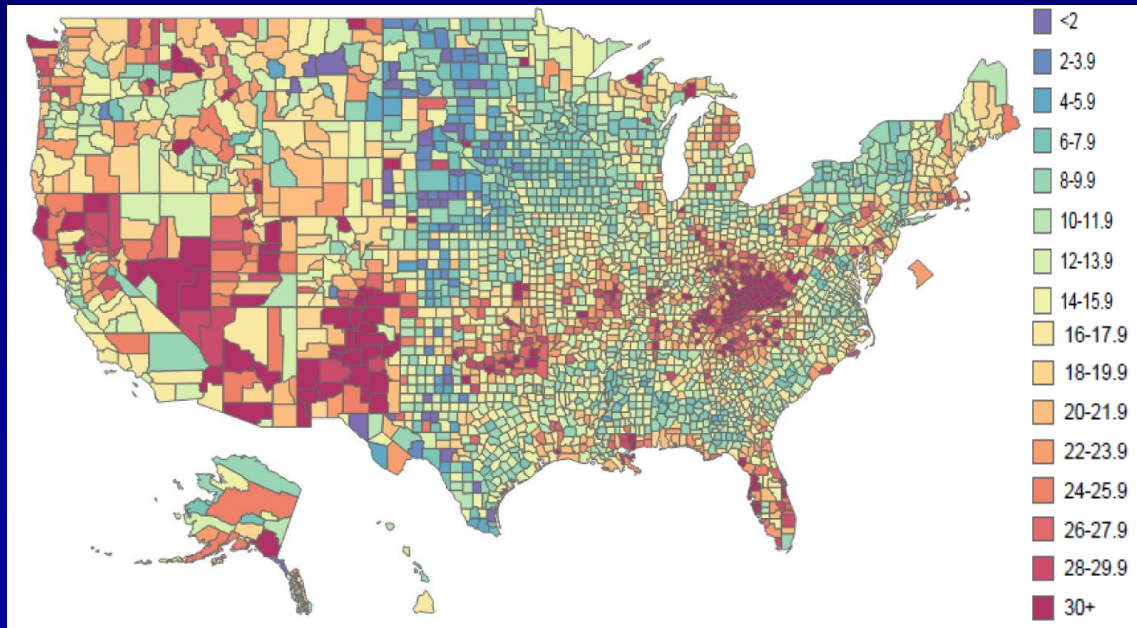
- An infected mother passing it to her baby at birth
- Sex with an infected person
- Direct contact with blood from an infected person, even in tiny amounts too small to see

Why is viral hepatitis getting worse?

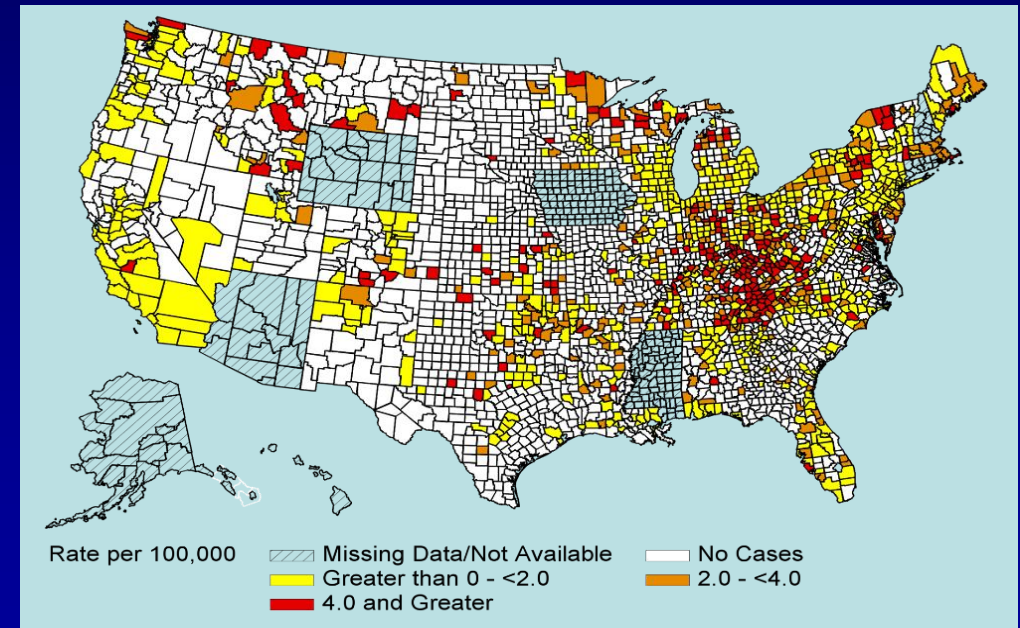
Geographic correlation between opioid prescriptions, drug poisoning deaths, and HCV infections



Amounts of opioids prescribed, by county, 2015



Drug poisoning death rates, by county, 2016



Reported New HCV Infections, 2013-14

Other Severe Infectious Consequences to Opioid Use

From 2002 to 2012:

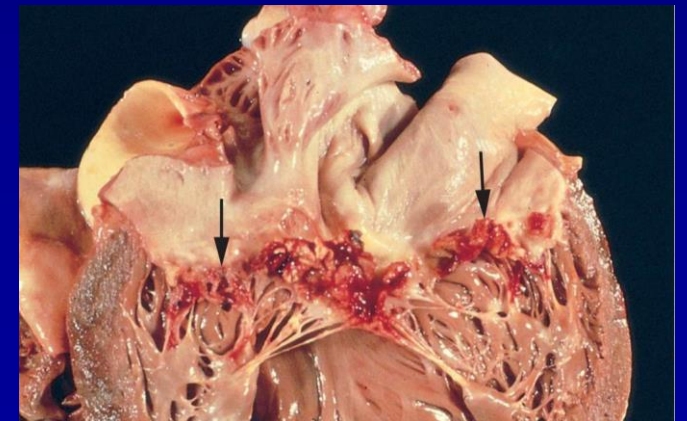
- Hospitalizations due to opioid use and:
 - Endocarditis ↑46%
 - Septic arthritis ↑166%
 - Epidural abscess ↑164%
 - Osteomyelitis ↑115%

Other costly health consequences:

- Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome increased 300% from 1999-2013
 - Cost >\$1.5 billion per year

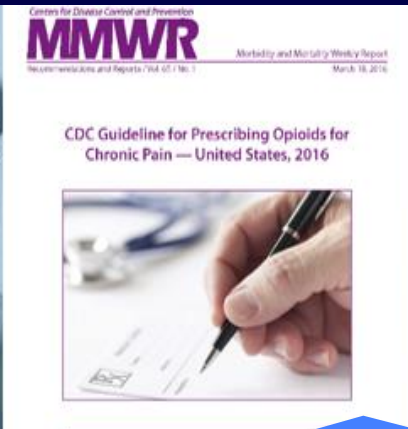


Necrotic skin ulcer



Endocarditis

What can we do?



Prevention of Harmful
Opioid Use



Prevention of Viral
Hepatitis

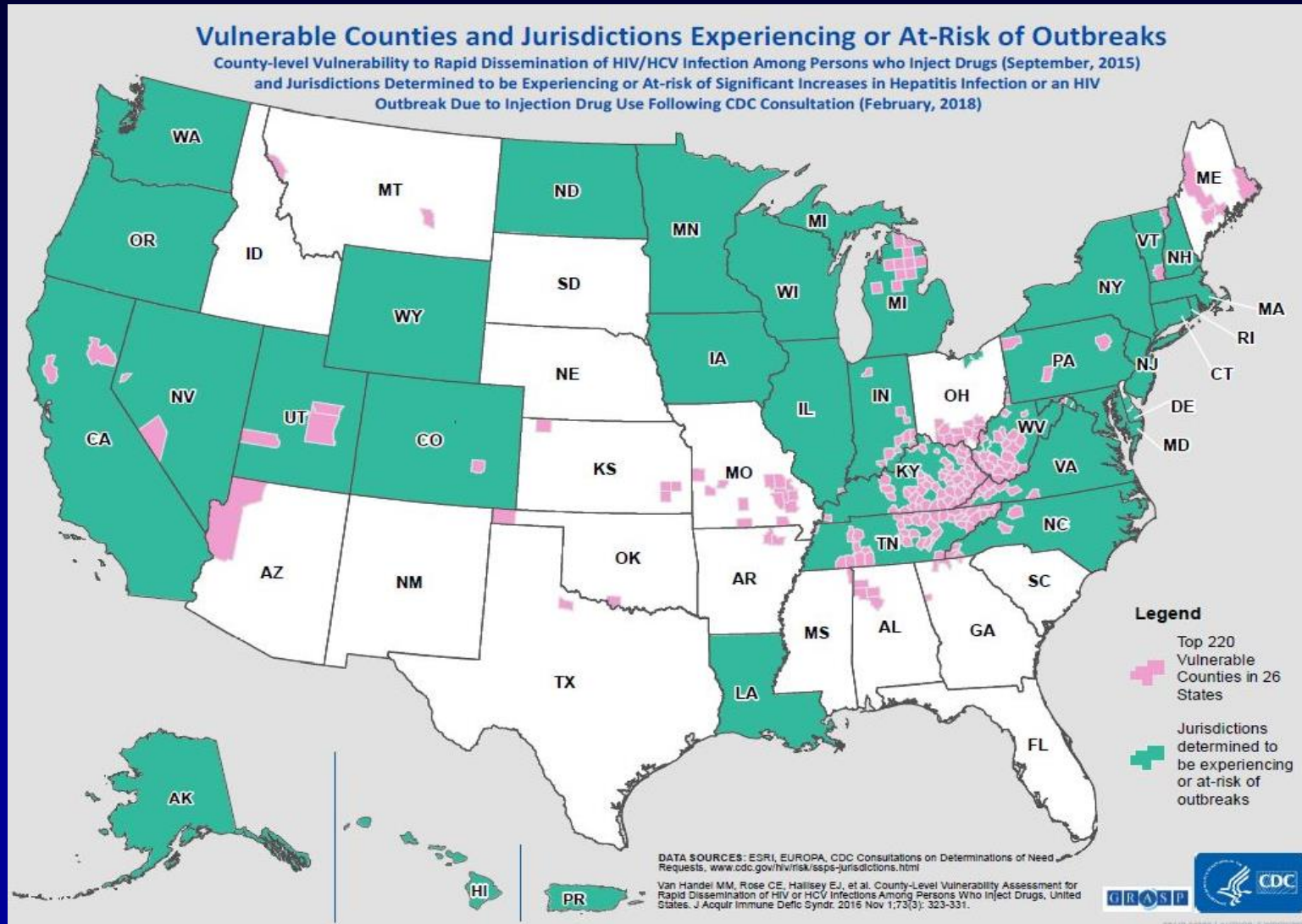


Treatment of
Substance Use
Disorder



Viral Hepatitis
Treatment

44 states and Puerto Rico have areas that are experiencing, or at risk for, increases or outbreaks of HCV/HIV



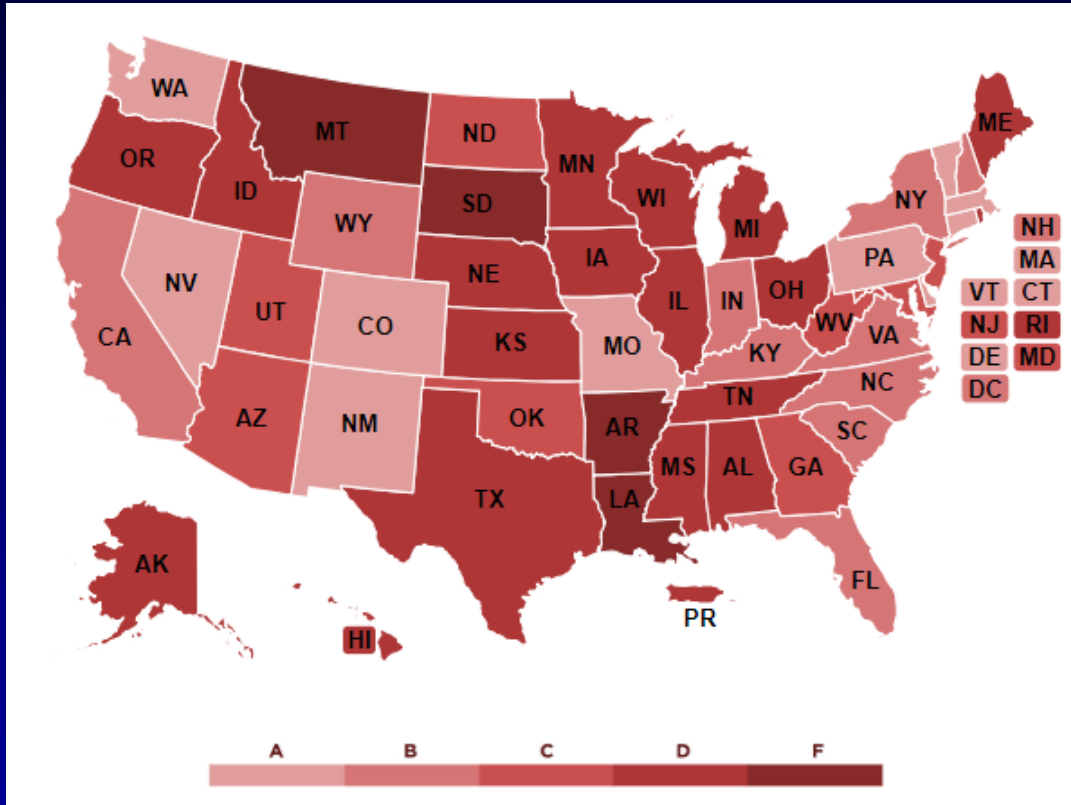
Just Released:
Managing HIV and hepatitis C outbreaks among persons who inject drugs - A guide for state and local health departments

Comprehensive Community Action

- Mobilize multi-sector community action, including healthcare, education agencies, public health, and law enforcement
- Comprehensive community prevention programs
 - Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) prevent overdoses; link patients to treatment; do not increase drug use or crime
 - People who used SSPs 3 times more likely to stop injecting
 - ~50% reduction in incidence of HCV and HIV with a greater effect when combined with substance use treatment



Improve Disease Prevention Strategies



Access to HCV treatment among Medicaid enrollees varies by state

- Respond quickly and comprehensively to **Hepatitis A** clusters
- Ensure **Hepatitis B** vaccines and testing are reaching the people who need them
- Increase screening, diagnosis, and treatment of **Hepatitis C** and reduce barriers to treatment access

Think Big, Act Fast

- The opioid epidemic is increasing infectious diseases
- Situation is not inevitable
- Acting quickly and at scale will prevent spread of infectious diseases and reduce overdose deaths
- Successful action will reduce drug use, save lives, and save money