

August 2018

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## Public Health Advisory: Hepatitis A

The bad news...

Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Boston Public Health Commission recently issued a [public health advisory for hepatitis A](#) with recommendations to prevent further infections.

In addition, cases of hepatitis C in Massachusetts has been [steadily increasing since 2007, with about 8,000-9,000 cases reported each year](#) according to the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. In 2007, rates of hepatitis C were highest in two different age groups: 1. older citizens with an average age of 50 years and 2. younger adults with an average age of 28 years. In 2015, reported cases were higher at 26 years and lower at 57 years, reflecting the increase in young people injecting opioids. In both 2007 and 2015, reported cases of new confirmed and probable hepatitis C infection in those less than 30 years of age were among men.

Now for some good news...

The Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School and the National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable published a study grading each state on access to [hepatitis treatment for Medicaid enrollees](#). Massachusetts was awarded an A. Each state was graded on three criteria: liver damage restrictions, length of sobriety before treatment, and prescriber restrictions. The study concluded that Medicaid recipients in Massachusetts do not face any of these restrictions.

Additionally, Massachusetts Department of Correction has [started treating prisoners for hepatitis C](#) under a settlement reached with prisoners' rights advocates. The settlement was agreed to in March 2018, and a federal judge formally approved it in June. State officials started implementing the agreement even before the terms of the settlement came into play. Under the settlement, prisoners with the most serious cases of hepatitis C must be treated within 12 months, while prisoners with less serious cases will have to be treated within 18 months, and every new prisoner will be tested for hepatitis C.

From a public health perspective, as the number of people living with hepatitis decreases over time, the number of new infections and reinfections will also decrease due to fewer potential vectors to spread the virus.

To schedule a training about Viral Hepatitis and what providers need to know, email us at [Praxis@center4si.com](mailto:Praxis@center4si.com).

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