

# Kentucky adults familiar with needle exchanges more likely to favor them

A November 2016 analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 54 of Kentucky's 120 counties were vulnerable to an outbreak of infectious diseases such as HIV or Hepatitis C among people who inject drugs.<sup>1</sup> Injection drug users are at increased risk of contracting such diseases.

Needle exchange programs, also known as syringe exchange programs, are an effective way to reduce this risk. A needle exchange program allows people who inject drugs to exchange used syringes for new, sterile syringes. Research has shown that such programs can help reduce the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C<sup>2</sup> and do not increase the frequency or initiation of drug use.<sup>3</sup> Currently 20 areas in Kentucky have syringe exchange programs.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Van Handel, M.M., Rose, C.E., Hallisey, E.J., et al. (2016). County-level vulnerability assessment for rapid dissemination of HIV or HCV infections among persons who inject drugs, United States. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, 73 (3), 323-331.

<sup>2</sup> Des Jarlais, D.C., Nugent, A., Solberg, A., Feelemyer, J., Mermin, J., & Holtzman, D. (2015). Syringe service programs for persons who inject drugs in urban, suburban, and rural areas - United States, 2013. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 64 (48), 1337-1341. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2nlK9t3>.

## How familiar are you with needle exchange programs?



## Do you favor or oppose needle exchange programs?



The **Kentucky Health Issues Poll (KHIP)**, sponsored by Interact for Health and the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, asked Kentucky adults about their familiarity with and opinions about needle exchange programs.

## More than half familiar with needle exchanges

KHIP asked, "I'd like to ask you about needle exchange programs offering clean needles to IV drug users in exchange for used needles.

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Medicine. Preventing HIV infection among injecting drug users in high-risk countries: An assessment of the evidence. (2006). Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2ndZGNR>.

<sup>4</sup> Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services: Department for Public Health. (2017) *HIV Prevention Program*. Retrieved March 13, 2017, from <http://bit.ly/2ouSb5X>.

How familiar are you with needle exchange programs which have been implemented in a number of cities across the Commonwealth?" Nearly 6 in 10 adults (56%) said they were very or somewhat familiar with these programs. About 4 in 10 (44%) said they were not very or not at all familiar with them.

More than 6 in 10 adults ages 46 to 64 (63%) were very or somewhat familiar with needle exchange programs. That compares with about 5 in 10 adults in other age groups. Adults in urban areas (64%) were more likely to be familiar with these programs than adults in suburban (50%) or rural (53%) areas.

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## More adults favor than oppose needle exchanges; adults more likely to favor if more familiar

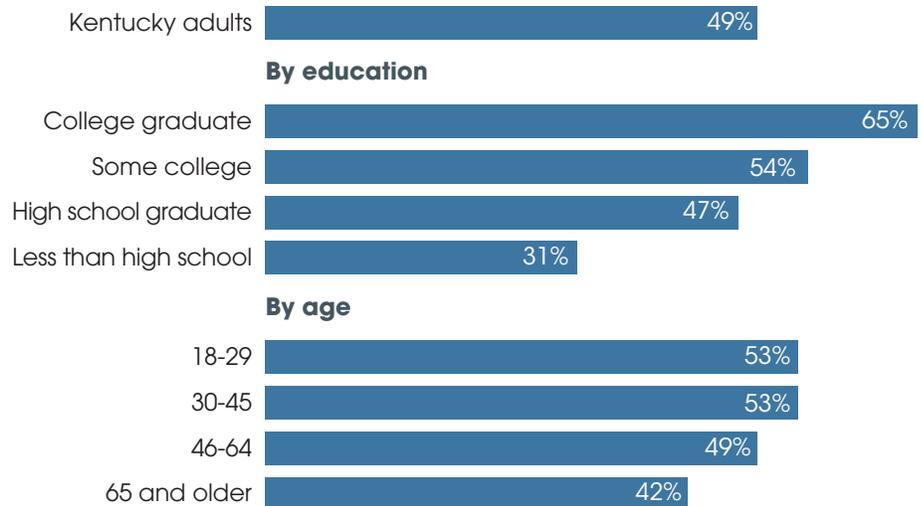
KHIP also asked adults if they favored or opposed needle exchange programs.<sup>5</sup> Nearly half of Kentucky adults (49%) said they favor such programs. This was higher than the 4 in 10 adults who said they oppose such programs (43%). About 1 in 10 said they neither opposed or favored such programs or were not sure (8%).

Nearly 6 in 10 adults who were **very** or **somewhat familiar** with needle exchange program favored such programs (59%). Fewer than 4 in 10 (37%) were opposed.

Fewer than 4 in 10 adults who were **not very** or **not at all familiar**

<sup>5</sup> KHIP asked, "Some people favor needle exchange programs because they feel these programs help reduce the spread of AIDS. Others oppose needle exchange programs because they feel these programs send the message that it's okay to use illegal drugs. What about you ... do you favor or oppose needle exchange programs?"

## Percentage of Kentucky adults who favor needle exchange programs



with needle exchange programs favored such programs (37%). Five in 10 (50%) were opposed and more than 1 in 10 (13%) were not sure.

## Older adults less likely to favor needle exchange; no variation by income

About 5 in 10 adults ages 18 to 29 (53%), 30 to 45 (53%) and 46 to 64

(49%) favored needle exchange programs. Support dropped to 4 in 10 adults older than 64 (42%).

Support did not vary by household income. About half of adults at all income levels favored needle exchange programs.

Support for needle exchange programs increased as education increased. (See graph above.)