



People with prison experience: Hepatitis C elimination

The *Ontario Hepatitis C Elimination Roadmap* is charting the path to eliminate hepatitis C.

More than 110,000 Ontarians are living with hepatitis C, a leading cause of death and chronic illness from an infectious disease. However, with widespread testing, an effective cure and proven prevention strategies, eliminating hepatitis C is within reach. The *Roadmap* outlines strategies to eliminate hepatitis C as a public health threat in Ontario by 2030, including among people with prison experience.

Read the full *Ontario Hepatitis C Elimination Roadmap* at on.endhepc.ca.

The context of hepatitis C among people with prison experience

Criminalization means people who use drugs are overrepresented in prisons, leading to high rates of hepatitis C in locations where there is little or no access to harm reduction. No access to new equipment increases the likelihood of people needing to share equipment for drug use or other practices such as tattooing. These activities result in an increased risk of hepatitis C transmission inside prisons.

Marginalized individuals have more opportunity to access healthcare during their prison sentence, including hepatitis C treatment. People who are incarcerated often have extremely complex health and social service needs, including higher rates of infectious and chronic diseases and issues with mental health, substance use and homelessness. There are a growing number of programs across the province to strengthen prison healthcare services. These include an investment in primary care nurse practitioners who can play a key role in hepatitis C care, as well as increased hepatitis C training for corrections healthcare staff.

How to address hepatitis C for people with prison experience

- **Standardize hepatitis C testing in prisons**, including universal, opt-out testing at admission, and make testing routinely available during a person's sentence.
- **Provide immediate linkage to treatment**, either through prison healthcare, or through a community provider for those who cannot complete treatment during their sentence, and ensure this care follows them if they are released or transferred to another institution.
- **Expand access to harm reduction and hepatitis C prevention services**, including access to new harm reduction supplies and immediate availability of opioid agonist therapy.
- **Collaborate with community organizations** to deliver hepatitis C services, including education, testing and linkage to care.
- **Promote anti-stigma, anti-racism and cultural safety awareness** among prison healthcare staff, including through training and through partnerships with community partners that serve specific populations (e.g., Indigenous, racialized, youth, gender-specific).