

Direct quotes from Maryland Syringe Service Program (SSP) Participants

Due to confidentiality and HIPAA compliance, these quotes are anonymously attributed.

"I spent a couple of years on parole for a bubble pipe that was never used and had no residue.. It was awful. I had an opioid addiction so I kept violating parole all the time (urine analysis) and it kept me in trouble a lot longer. That's not rehabilitation. You lock us up with people, criminals of all sorts. No one is even going to accept help unless they're ready - keeping someone away from their family, their children, - it never helps. You are harming everyone involved. Locking someone up for [something that] may be drug related but is not a drug does not help anyone"

"I've seen people pick up used syringes off the ground when they didn't have one. They know the risks - that they could get HIV or hep C - but they're too scared to pick up [sterile syringes] from a program. These were young people too, in their 20s and 30s."

"If they find a piece of chore in your car, they're tearing the seats apart. [This type of law] is the excuse they need [to go after me]. If you know I'm an addict you're just trying to find a way to lock me up."

"I know other people who are worried [about being stopped for paraphernalia] and they do the same thing as me - they just don't go certain places. I also know people who are harassed and checked on by police a lot. So they just don't carry new ones [sterile syringes] on them."

"A cop the other day stopped me and asked me about my syringes, the ones I got from you [the SSP]. He said he had to search me and I told him 'no', that I know my rights and I got these from you. He left after a while, but why should I have to protect myself and prove myself all the time when I know it's not illegal?"

"I was stuck with a syringe as a child in the 70s. I was lucky - I didn't catch any diseases. But someone else's child may not be so lucky. As a user, it's imperative to me to get syringes off the streets, especially used ones...[Ending paraphernalia penalties] would make returning syringes a lot better. It's a big reason why people don't - they don't want to get caught with them."