

# NATIONAL REVIEW

## Surgeon General Rejects Supervised Injection Sites: 'Safer Doesn't Mean Safe'

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Surgeon General Jerome Adams on Wednesday rejected the provision of supervised injection sites, facilities where people can inject themselves with illegal drugs under medical supervision, as a response to the opioid crisis, citing safety concerns.

"I'm not bashing any particular person or group," Adams said at the libertarian Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., "But the truth is, I have looked at the data, and I have seen little to no data suggesting they are overall more effective than expanding syringe services programs."

"Safer doesn't mean safe," the surgeon general added about the so-called "safe" injection sites. "People can still leave and fall or drive away and crash."

The "syringe exchange services" Adams referenced provide drug users with clean needles with the goal of preventing the spread of HIV and hepatitis, which the Trump administration has promised to halt over the next decade.

"The two are different, and we want to optimize the things that we know work before we start having conversations about more controversial interventions," Adams said, adding that he encourages providing drug users with the overdose reversal drug naloxone, which needle exchange sites distribute.

However, needle exchange programs are only legal in 30 states and the District of Columbia and remain illegal in the rest of the country as critics worry that they "enable" or "endorse" drug addiction.

Deaths from opioids increased about 8 percent from 1999 to 2013, and then spiked 70 percent from 2013 to 2017 as the crisis spun out of control. Opioids caused 47,600 deaths in 2017, at which point the White House declared the opioid epidemic a public-health crisis.

In October, a report from the Justice Department's inspector general showed that the Drug Enforcement Administration permitted painkiller manufacturers to exponentially increase production of opioids even in the face of data showing overdose deaths were spiking,

Almost every state along with thousands of local governments and other entities have sued the pharmaceutical industry over the opioid crisis.