

## **Guiding the sector – Clinical support tools to achieve hepatitis C elimination in NSW.**

### **Authors:**

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**Background:** The NSW Hepatitis C Strategy (2022 – 2025) aims to achieve hepatitis C (HCV) elimination in NSW by 2028, two years ahead of the World Health Organization 2030 goal. Large increases in HCV treatment initiations in NSW occurred in 2016, however the number of treatments has steadily declined since 2017. To reverse this trend, NSW Health developed a range of clinical support tools to increase testing and treatment.

**Argument:** The NSW Ministry of Health (Ministry), in collaboration with stakeholders from key services including drug and alcohol, mental health and needle and syringe programs (NSPs) developed four clinical support tools:

1. HCV activities in key settings
2. Enablers for HCV treatment uptake
3. HCV testing framework
4. HCV testing and care in AOD services

The clinical support tools provided guidance on the models of HCV care for services outlined in the NSW HCV Strategy (2022 – 2025). The tools outlined varying models of care including workforce types, testing options, treatment pathways and available incentives to increase engagement in care.

**Outcome:** The clinical support tools were distributed to Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) for implementation in services including drug and alcohol, NSPs and Aboriginal community health services. The clinical support tools will be updated annually to ensure they remain innovative in the response to HCV. In 2023 NSW increased testing by 34% and treatment initiations by 17% compared to 2022.

**Conclusion:** Providing clinical guidance and support to LHDs and NGOs is crucial for HCV elimination in NSW. NSW has treated 59% of people (36,605) estimated to be living with HCV, saving an estimated \$103,748,045 in avoidable care costs. The Ministry will continue to work with LHDs and NGOs to implement innovative efforts to increase testing and treatment uptake and ultimately improve the health outcomes of people living with HCV.

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