

U.S. Justice Dept. might allow safe injection sites to curb opioid deaths

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(HealthDay)—There are indications the U.S. Justice Department may be

open to the idea of allowing safe injection sites, a year after it won a court battle against them.

The department told the *Associated Press* that it is "evaluating" safe injection sites and speaking with regulators about "appropriate guardrails."

The aim: To help stem overdose deaths among users of opioids. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [over 100,000 Americans died](#) from [drug overdose](#) during the year ending in April 2021.

Safe injection sites give users a monitored space for injected drug use, with overdose antidotes on hand should any such emergency arise.

Proponents of safe injection sites say they help reduce overdose deaths, while critics argue they encourage illegal drug use and harm neighborhoods.

There are already safe injection sites in Canada, Australia and Europe, and they've been discussed in some U.S. cities and states for years. A few unofficial sites have operated for some time, [and two opened in New York City in November.](#)

Last year, the Justice Department won a lawsuit to prevent a safe consumption site from opening in Philadelphia. But officials now say they are taking a fresh look at such sites.

"Although we cannot comment on pending litigation, the Department is evaluating supervised consumption sites, including discussions with state and local regulators about appropriate guardrails for such sites, as part of an overall approach to harm reduction and [public safety](#)," the agency said in a statement to the *AP*.

The two sites in New York City, dubbed "overdose prevention centers," are run by a group called OnPoint NYC. It said the sites have intervened in more than 125 overdoses among more than 640 users.

The Justice Department's statement was welcomed by the organization's executive director.

"I believe they're going to land in the right place here and we'll be able to, together, really expand on this health initiative that's saving lives every day," Sam Rivera told the *AP*.

But there is political opposition, as well. In a statement, U.S. Rep. Nicole Malliotakis, a New York City Republican, said that "instead of stopping the deadly drugs streaming over our border, putting [drug dealers](#) behind bars and helping people receive the long-term treatment they need to overcome addiction, Democrat leadership is enabling illegal drug use."

More information: Find out more about more about safe injection sites at the [Drug Policy Alliance](#).

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