

Hepatitis C Elimination during a Global Pandemic: A Case Study of Resilience in Action

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Abstract

Until the COVID-19 pandemic, San Francisco's hepatitis C virus (HCV) elimination initiative, End Hep C SF, was expanding and refining HCV testing and treatment strategies citywide, making progress toward local HCV elimination goals. Although a shelter-in-place health order issued in March 2020 categorized HCV testing as an "essential service," most HCV testing and treatment immediately stopped until COVID-19-safe protocols could be implemented. During the 14 months of pandemic-related organizational closures, End Hep C SF transitioned to a 100% virtual model, maintaining regularly scheduled meetings. Community-based HCV antibody testing decreased 80% from February to April 2020, and HCV treatment initiation also decreased, although both services started to rebound in mid-to-late 2020, partially as a result of End Hep C SF collaborations. End Hep C SF service providers, clinicians, and advocates reported that the continuous communication and common agenda of End Hep C SF—2 principles of the collective impact initiative—served as a familiar touchpoint and helpful source of information during this isolating and uncertain time.

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