

HARM REDUCTION:

PREVENT FATAL DRUG OVERDOSES & STOP THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE

FACT SHEET

What is harm reduction?

Harm reduction treats people as human beings regardless of their drug use. Not everyone can completely stop their drug use. Abstinence is not always a goal for everyone who uses drugs. Harm reduction is a public health strategy that respects the rights of people who use drugs and meets people where they're at. It reduces health risks and keeps people safe from overdose.

Harm Reduction Programs...

- ✓ Keep people alive until they decide that they are ready to start treatment.
- ✓ Use a variety of strategies to promote positive change in people's lives. These strategies include needle exchange, naloxone, and fentanyl testing.
- ✓ Connect people to other services they need, like medical care, housing, and benefits. Research shows that harm reduction programs also help connect people to substance use treatment.
- ✓ Reduce stigma towards people who use drugs (PWUDs). PWUDs are judged by others, judge themselves, and are reluctant to seek treatment because of stigma.
- ✓ Do not encourage people to keep using drugs.

BENEFITS:



Decrease the number of overdose deaths



Decrease the spread of diseases like HIV & Hep C



Decrease used needles in public areas



Increase access to drug treatment & recovery support services

Harm reduction is used in many ways to prevent deaths and serious injuries.

For Example:



Seat belts and airbags protect people in case of a car crash



Helmets reduce the likelihood of a head injury



Sunscreen reduces the likelihood of skin cancer

...and it works for people who use drugs.

Examples of Harm Reduction Strategies for Substance Use:



Fentanyl Test Strips detect fentanyl in a drug sample. Fentanyl is a dangerous opioid that causes many overdose deaths.



Clean equipment for non-injecting drug users includes safe smoking and snorting kits that reduce the spread of disease and infection.



Syringe Exchange Programs offer new needles to people who inject drugs, collect used needles, and link clients to medical care and other services.



Naloxone, also known as Narcan, is a prescription medication that reverses the effects of opioid overdoses. Narcan saves lives. Anyone and everyone can be trained to use Narcan to save a life.



Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS), or safe injection sites, are healthcare sites where people bring drugs they've bought and use safely. Nurses and other healthcare professionals are on site and can step in and reverse an overdose if it happens. Research shows that no deaths have ever occurred in an OPS.