Drug User Health and Harm Reduction

2021 HOPE Consortium Virtual Conference
August 6, 2021

Topics for Today

• Human Dignity
• Stigma and Trauma
• Overview of Harm Reduction
• Stages of Change
• Interactive Q & A

Human Dignity

Human dignity means that an individual or group feels self-respected and self-worth. It is concerned with physical and psychological integrity and empowerment.
Trauma-Informed Approach

Trauma is the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual’s ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness, diminishes their sense of self, and their ability to feel the full range of emotions and experiences.

Language

- Research demonstrates that the language we use about drug use can affect our attitudes toward people who use drugs.
- Our attitudes, in turn, impact our actions and our policies.
- When working with people who use substances it is important to use non-stigmatizing language.


Model Respectful Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Use Instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuser</td>
<td>Person with a substance use disorder,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addict</td>
<td>Person who uses drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junkie</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Dirty&quot; (person/syringe)</td>
<td>Positive urinalysis, used syringe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Clean&quot; (person/syringe)</td>
<td>Negative urinalysis, unused syringe, substance-free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Substance use, substance misuse, non-medical use, risky use</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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**Working Definition of Harm Reduction**

Harm reduction is a set of practical public health strategies designed to reduce the negative consequences of drug use and promote healthy individuals and communities.

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**Key Principles of Harm Reduction**

- Promote public health interventions that minimize the harmful affects of drug use.
- Understand drug use as a complex, multifaceted issue that encompasses behaviors from severe abuse to total abstinence.
- Meet people where they are in the course of their drug use.

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**Key Principles of Harm Reduction**

- Ensure that people who use drugs have a real voice in the creation of programs.
- Affirm people who use drugs are the primary agents of change.
- Empower communities to share information and support each other.
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Social and Environmental Factors

Harm reduction does not attempt to minimize the real dangers associated with legal and illegal drug use and how those issues impact our lives.

Harm Reduction Practice

- Nonjudgmental, non-coercive provision of services
- Low-threshold program models
- Resources to people who use drugs

Goals of Harm Reduction

- Prevent disease: sterile syringe access to prevent HIV and hepatitis
- Reduce mortality: Fatal overdose prevention with training and naloxone distribution; link to medical care and social services
Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Goals of Harm Reduction

- Treatment for drug dependence: buprenorphine, methadone, naltrexone, or Suboxone®
- Empower communities and reduce stigma: community organizing and engagement

“Meeting people where they are at and not leaving them there.”

Sterile Syringe Access Program Models

- Storefront
- Street-based
- Peer and secondary exchange through networks
- Underground, unauthorized programs
Harm Reduction Supplies

- Syringes or needles
- Cookers
- Cotton
- Alcohol wipes
- Antibiotic ointment
- Tourniquets
- Fentanyl test strips
- Naloxone

Overdose Education

Overdose education and naloxone distribution has been part of the harm reduction landscape for decades.

- Began with a focus on those at risk for overdose through syringe exchange programs.
- Provide crucial education on overdose risk.
- Support naloxone distribution as an empowerment tool for individuals and communities.

Harm Reduction Resource

http://www.harmreductioncoalition.org
Stages of Change

- Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross – 1992
- Transtheoretical model (assesses persons ability to act)
- Integrative biopsychosocial model
- Conceptualizes the process of intentional change
- Can be applied to a variety of behaviors, populations, and settings
- Works well with harm reduction

Stages of Change

- Pre-contemplation (Not ready)
- Contemplation (Getting ready)
- Preparation (Ready)
- Action
- Maintenance
- Relapse

Implementing Harm Reduction

- Treatment planning
- Nonjudgmental interactions with individuals
- Encouraging any positive change
- Drug user health versus medical health