



# **Harm Reduction Approach**

**Vermont Learning Collaborative | March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**Mike Selick, MSW**

Associate Director of Capacity Building

[Selick@HarmReduction.org](mailto:Selick@HarmReduction.org)

**NATIONAL  
HARM REDUCTION  
COALITION**

National Harm Reduction Coalition creates spaces  
for **dialogue and action** that help heal the harms caused  
by racialized drug policies.



---

Policy &  
Advocacy



---

National &  
Regional  
Conferences



---

Trainings &  
Technical  
Assistance



---

Overdose  
Prevention



---

Resources &  
Publications

# ZOOM HOUSEKEEPING

- + Add your **pronouns** to your name
  - + Desktop-click on hamburger icon “...” on your image and click “Rename”
  - + Mobile-click ‘Participants’ and your name, click ‘Rename’ to add pronouns
- + Please **mute your mic** unless you are speaking
- + Use the “**raise hand**” function if you would like to speak.
- + Use the **mentimeter** to participate in the activities
- + Feel free to use the hand clap and thumbs-up emojis to **let us know** how you are feeling
- + **Tech issues happen**, let’s just roll with them!

PWID	People Who Inject Drugs
PWUD	People Who Use Drugs
PLWHA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
HCV	Hepatitis C Virus
SEP	Syringe Exchange Program
SSP	Syringe Services Programs



# What Is Harm Reduction?



*Harm Reduction Portraits,  
Luceo Photographers*

# Defining Harm Reduction

(H)arm (R)eduction	(h)arm (r)eduction
A movement based in a political liberatory framework that shifts power and resources to people vulnerable to structural violence	The interventions and practices

# Benefits of Harm Reduction

Challenge Stigma & Discrimination

Increase Trust with Clients and  
Foster Engagement

Improve Public Health with  
Individuals and Community-wide

# Creating a culture of safety

*How your agency may be stigmatizing people who access your services? What strategies have you put in place or could put in place to overcome this?*



- Visuals
- Space considerations
- The awareness & alliances we create in the community
- Policies and practice
- Language
- Staff training & hiring PWUD
- From the front door to the back



# Harm Reduction Interventions...

- A set of practical strategies to reduce negative consequences of drug use and sexual risk.
- Are not hinged on abstinence but abstinence is an important part of our spectrum
- Incorporate a spectrum of strategies including *safer techniques, managed use, and abstinence.*
- Meet people “where they're at” *but doesn't leave them there.*

# Harm Reduction...

- Does not minimize or ignore the harms associated with licit & illicit drug use & sexual activity.
- Applies evidence-based interventions to reduce negative consequences of these behaviors. Eg: syringe access, naloxone, condoms, PrEP
- Moves past judgment of a person's drug use & sexual activity & addresses the whole person.
- Works to elicit any positive change based on the individual's needs, circumstances, readiness to change, & believing their abilities to change.

# HARM REDUCTION IS...

A holistic approach to working with people at higher-risk in relation to HIV, drug use, and sexual behaviors.

Programs can be:

Low-Threshold, Convenient, Evidence-based

Providers can be:

Positive - Honest - Productive  
Pragmatic - Client-centered - Without Bias

# Quick History of Harm Reduction

- 1970s: PWUD in the Netherlands organized to form “Junkie Unions” to demand fair drug policies.
- 1980s: PWUD in the US began to provide syringe exchange in response to the HIV crisis. **Edith Springer**, a trainer from New York, visited the UK and the Netherlands and returned to promote harm reduction in the US.
- 1988: the US got its first above-ground Syringe Exchange Programs in Tacoma, WA and through the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOMH)
- 1993: Harm Reduction Working Group formed.

# PRINCIPLES OF HARM REDUCTION

Health and  
Dignity

Participant  
Centered  
Services

Participant  
Involvement

Participant  
Autonomy

Sociocultural  
Factors

Pragmatism and  
Realism

# FOCUS ON HEALTH AND DIGNITY

Establishes **quality of individual and community life and well-being** as the criteria for successful interventions and policies.



# PARTICIPANT-CENTERED SERVICES

Calls for the **non-judgmental, non-coercive** provision of services and resources to people who use drugs and the communities in which they live in order to assist them in reducing attendant harm.



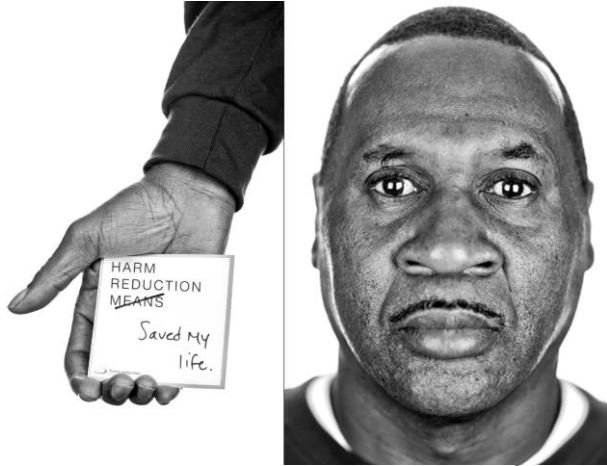
# PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT



Ensures participants and communities impacted have a **real voice in the creation of programs and policies** designed to serve them.



# PARTICIPANT AUTONOMY



Affirms participants themselves as the **primary agents of change**, and seeks to **empower** participants to share information and support each other in strategies which meet their actual conditions of harm.

# SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS



Recognizes that the realities of various **social inequalities** affect both people's **vulnerability to and capacity for** effectively dealing with potential harm.

# PRAGMATIC AND REALISTIC



Does **not** attempt to minimize or ignore the **real and tragic harm and danger** associated with licit and illicit drug use or other risk behaviors.

# ACTIVITY: PRINCIPLES IN ACTION!

- Using the mentimeter, share which of these principles resonates with you and which is the hardest to implement in the place that you work.

Health and  
Dignity

Participant  
Centered  
Services

Participant  
Involvement

Participant  
Autonomy

Sociocultural  
Factors

Pragmatism  
and Realism

# ACTIVITY: PRINCIPLES IN ACTION!

- which of these principles resonates with you
- which is the hardest to implement in the place that you work.

Health and  
Dignity

Participant  
Centered  
Services

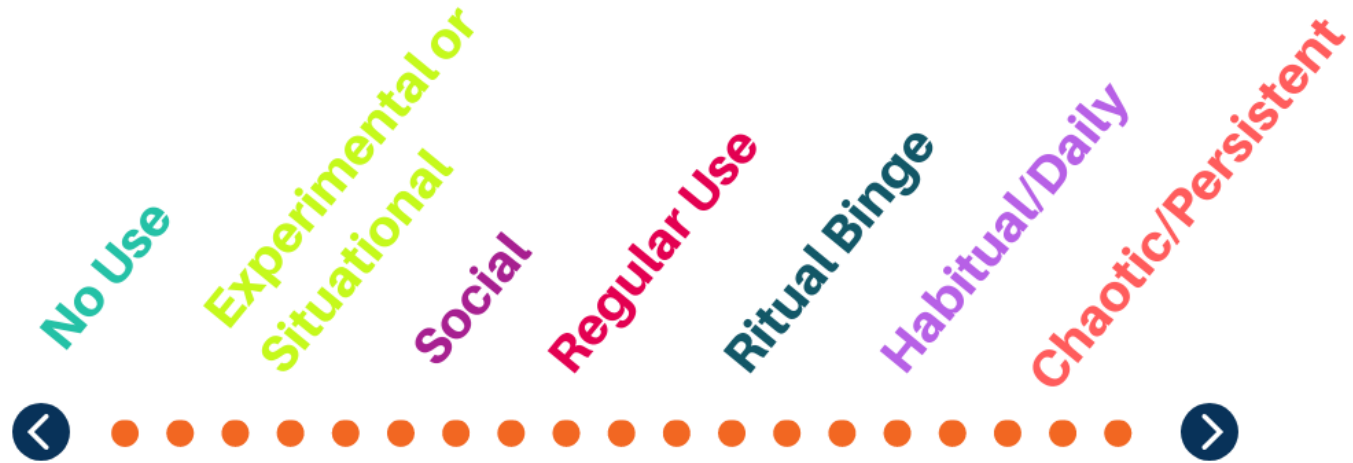
Participant  
Involvement

Participant  
Autonomy

Sociocultural  
Factors

Pragmatism and  
Realism

## Continuum of Drug Use &/or Engaging in Sex Work



# Harm Reduction Services



**Syringe  
Access**



**Syringe  
Disposal**



**Safer Drug  
Use**



**Naloxone**



**Medication  
Assisted  
Treatment**



**Supervised  
Consumption  
Services**



**Drop-In  
Centers**



**Housing  
First**



**Pharmacy  
Access**



**Referrals**

*"Harm reduction is revolutionary love, and it's very real, and it's very concrete.... we try to embody that as much as possible by creating this loving space, and really caring for people."*

**Rafi Torruella, Executive Director, Intercambios, Puerto Rico**







# **THANK YOU** FOR ATTENDING **THIS WORKSHOP**

**Mike Selick**  
Selick@HarmReduction.org

harmreduction.org  
Copyright 2020 National Harm Reduction Coalition

**NATIONAL**  
**HARM REDUCTION**  
**COALITION**