Harm Reduction Basics

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Language Matters

PWID—People Who Inject Drugs
PWUD—People Who Use Drugs
SUD —Substance Use Disorder
Licit / Illicit
Questioning Constructs

Why are drugs illegal?

What consequences of drug use are naturally occurring and what consequences are imposed?

Who is harmed by drug use?
Working Definition of Harm Reduction

A set of practical public health strategies designed to reduce the negative consequences of drug use and promote healthy individuals, families, and communities.
Key Principles of Harm Reduction

- Focus on health and dignity
- Client-centered services
- Client involvement
- Client autonomy
- Sociocultural factors
- Pragmatism and Realism
Focus on Health and Dignity

Establishes quality and well-being of individual, family, and community life as the criteria for successful interventions and policies.
Client-Centered Services

Non-judgmental and non-coercive provision of services and resources.
Client Involvement

Ensures clients and their families have a real voice in the creation of programs and policies designed to serve them.
Client Autonomy

Affirms people who use drugs themselves as their own primary agents of change.
Sociocultural Factors

Recognizes the various social inequalities which affect people’s vulnerabilities to and capacity for effectively dealing with potential harm.
Pragmatism and Realism

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.
Relationship with Drugs

- Drug use is a complex phenomenon
- PWUD are unique
- PWUD have unique relationships with the drugs they use.
Drug, Set, & Setting

**Drug**
- The drug used, how it's used, how much is used, drug pharmacology

**Set**
- Mindset, demographic & social characteristics, physical & mental health, interpersonal skills

**Setting**
- Physical, social, economic, cultural, and emotional background
Meeting People Where They Are

“To meet you where you are at,
I first must quiet the voice
that tells me you need to be where I am”
Participant Driven Interventions

• Participants define what behavioral changes they are willing, ready, and able to make.

• Abstinence is not a prerequisite for behavioral change.

• *Any positive change* is an indication of a successful intervention.
Stages of Change

1. No, not me.
   Pre-contemplation

2. Well, maybe.
   Contemplation

3. So, ok. What do I do now?
   Preparation

4. Let's do this.
   Action

5. It is possible.
   Maintenance
Cultivating Change

• Explore ambivalence
• Support self-identified changes
• Promote flexible and creative problem solving
• Increasing motivation for change
• Building self-efficacy
• Empower with tools for change
Celebrating Change

Any positive change, regardless of the increment, is a success to be CELEBRATED!!!
Recovery Within Harm Reduction

• Reduction or absence of harm.
• Any step taken to reduce harm is a step towards recovery.
• Ability to make meaningful life change is not defined by drug or alcohol use.
Recovery Within Harm Reduction

Behavioral changes

Self-directed life

Fuller potential & Better version self
Recovery Within Harm Reduction

Recovery is best represented as a *spectrum of change* that has “*Taking steps to reduce harms associated with my drug use*” on one end of the spectrum...
Recovery Within Harm Reduction

... and “Abstaining from

• *drug use* and that causes harm in my life or the lives of others, and

• *behavior* that causes harm in my life or the lives of others”

on the other end.
Recovery Within Harm Reduction

Any choice that increases someone’s ability to live a *self-directed life*, to be a *better version of themselves*, or to take a step towards *reaching their potential* is a step that places them on the spectrum of recovery.
Questions?

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