



# HARM REDUCTION IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

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*HPG Meeting*

*Lori Jones and Felipe Ruiz*

*April 27, 2022*





## Review Harm Reduction Principles

- Trigger warning for those who know, love and work with persons with a substance use disorder (person-centered)
- Basics of harm reduction for people who inject drugs

## Harm Reduction Services and Resources

- Currently available services: Syringe Service Programs (SSPs), naloxone distribution
- County of San Diego Harm Reduction Framework and Community Readiness Assessment for SSPs

# WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?

*An approach to services and policy that protects the life, health, and dignity of people who use illegal drugs and their communities. Unlike approaches that insist that people stop using drugs, harm reduction recognizes that many people are not willing or able to abstain, and that withholding assistance and otherwise punishing people and communities for using illegal drugs only worsens health, racial and economic inequities, and other harms.*

Open Society Foundations, 2022



# NATIONAL HARM REDUCTION COALITION

Harm reduction incorporates a spectrum of strategies that includes safer use, managed use, abstinence, meeting people who use drugs “where they’re at,” and addressing conditions of use along with the use itself.

National Harm Reduction Coalition

<https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>

[NHRC-PDF-Principles Of Harm Reduction.pdf](#)  
[\(harmreduction.org\)](#)



# HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

- Naloxone (reverse opioid overdose) distribution, training, and use
- Syringe service programs
- Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)
- Housing that does not require abstinence
- Education and supplies
- Substance use treatment with MAT
- Advocacy for the rights of people who inject drugs

Source: list adapted from Open Society Foundations, 2022



# FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS OF SAN DIEGO, **SAFEPOINT** (SINCE 2002)

A mobile van offering one-for-one exchange of used syringes for new syringes.

Program offers:

- Harm reduction education
- Harm reduction/safer sex supplies
- Overdose prevention (naloxone)
- Referrals
- Case management
- Monthly mobile medical services: HIV and hepatitis C testing, MAT, and wound care



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# HARM REDUCTION COALITION OF SAN DIEGO, **ON POINT**, SINCE 2020

Needs-based mobile/home delivery model delivered by volunteers and staff with lived experience.

Program offers:

- Training and harm reduction education
- Harm reduction and safer sex supplies
- Overdose prevention
- Referrals
- Home visit
- Street outreach



# EVALUATION

- Institute of Public Health (IPH) operates out of San Diego State University; HIV evaluation since 1997 and HIV prevention evaluation since 2006
- IPH has conducted recent research on people who inject drugs





# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO COMPREHENSIVE HARM REDUCTION STRATEGY

- Background: Why is this needed?
  - Harms related to substance use at an all-time high
  - Roadmap to address substance use and overdose deaths in San Diego County
- County Approach
  - Levering multi-disciplinary expertise
  - Evidence-based approaches



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO COMPREHENSIVE HARM REDUCTION STRATEGY

- Strategic Areas
  - Collaboration
  - Housing
  - Workforce
  - Healthcare Integration and Access
    - Naloxone Distribution Program
    - Syringe Service Action Plan



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# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO COMPREHENSIVE HARM REDUCTION STRATEGY

## HEALTHCARE INTEGRATION AND ACCESS

- Local Naloxone Distribution Effort
  - What is Naloxone?
  - County approach
  - Achievements



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO COMPREHENSIVE HARM REDUCTION STRATEGY

## HEALTHCARE INTEGRATION AND ACCESS

- Overview of Syringe Service Programs (SSP)
  - What is an SSP?
  - Evidence-based harm reduction strategy
  - Operating in California since the 1980s



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO COMPREHENSIVE HARM REDUCTION STRATEGY

## HEALTHCARE INTEGRATION AND ACCESS

- SSP Community Readiness Assessment
  - Needs and preferences of Persons who Inject Drugs
  - Public opinion
  - Staff and stakeholder perspectives



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# QUESTIONS

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*Thank you!*





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