

# HARM REDUCTION 101

DHD#10

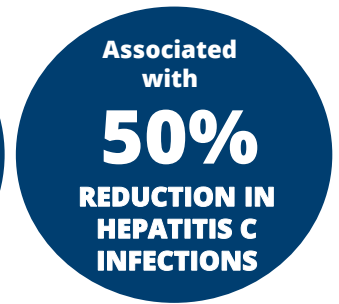
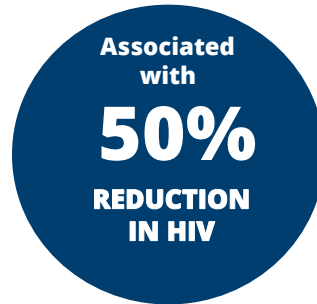
According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), harm reduction helps people who use drugs avoid negative effects, like infection or overdose. But it's also more than that. In addition, "many understand harm reduction as a way to meet people where they are with kindness and respect."

## Core Tenets

Embraced by many organizations working in this space

1	<b>Any positive change</b> The point of this phrase is simple: You decide exactly what needs to change in your life and when it happens. Maybe it's consuming one bag of heroin per day instead of three. Or maybe it's stopping consuming heroin all together. Harm reduction honors the choice to abstinence, but it doesn't see it as the only option for people to improve their lives.
2	<b>Meet people where they are</b> Harm reduction doesn't put conditions on who deserves health and safety. Instead, it seeks to provide judgment-free support for people at all points of the substance use spectrum.
3	<b>'Nothing about us without us'</b> Emphasize the importance of people who use drugs being meaningfully engaged and empowered to intervene in policy decisions affecting their lives.
4	<b>Drug use is here to stay</b> Efforts should be directed toward minimizing harms instead of the near impossible task of eradicating drug use.
5	<b>Peoples' relationships to drugs are numerous and complex</b> Simply consuming a drug, even on the daily, does not mean you're addicted to it. Many factors help define what drugs mean for you in your life.

## SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAMS (SSPs)



These programs give people who inject drugs a place to safely discard used syringes and acquire new ones. SSPs are associated with a 50% reduction in HIV and acute Hepatitis C infections, [per the CDC](#). They also have a high success rate in terms of treatment and recovery: "the majority of SSPs offer referrals to medication-assisted treatment, and new users of SSPs are **five times** more likely to enter drug treatment and **three times** more likely to stop using drugs than those who don't use the programs."

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**Harm reduction does not "enable" drug use. Instead, it replaces coercion with compassion**

Research shows that involuntary addiction treatment is **not effective** and **can increase the risk of overdose**. Harm reduction is so valuable because it empowers people with substance use disorders to make their own decisions about their lives and health, which in turn increases rates of treatment initiation and long-term success in recovery. As we've seen with the examples above, harm reduction programs are consistently associated with lower rates of infection and overdose, as well as higher rates of successful referrals to treatment.