

Definition

Harm Re·duc·tion \harm r-dkshn\ n.:

A public health philosophy which promotes methods of reducing the physical, social, emotional, and economic harm associated with drug and alcohol use and other harmful behaviors on individuals, their family and community. Harm reduction methods and treatment goals are free of judgment or blame and directly involve the client in setting their own goals.

Harm Reduction is:

Stable and affordable housing

A living wage, food security

Job development & training

Universal health care

Culturally competent education and services

Social justice

For more information:

Project SAFE

Link Center MU 301
Information, Referrals, & Safer Sex Supplies
415.452.5070
www.ccsf.edu/hiv

San Francisco AIDS Foundation Hotline

415.487.3000 or 1.800.FOR.AIDS
www.sfaf.org

Center for Disease Control & Prevention

CDC HIV & STI Info
1.800.232.4636 or 1.800.CDC.INFO
www.cdc.gov

California AIDS Hotline

1.800.367.2437

San Francisco Sex Information Hotline

415.989.7374

Needle Exchange HIV Prevention Project

415.241.1500
www.sfaf.org

Needle Exchange Sites

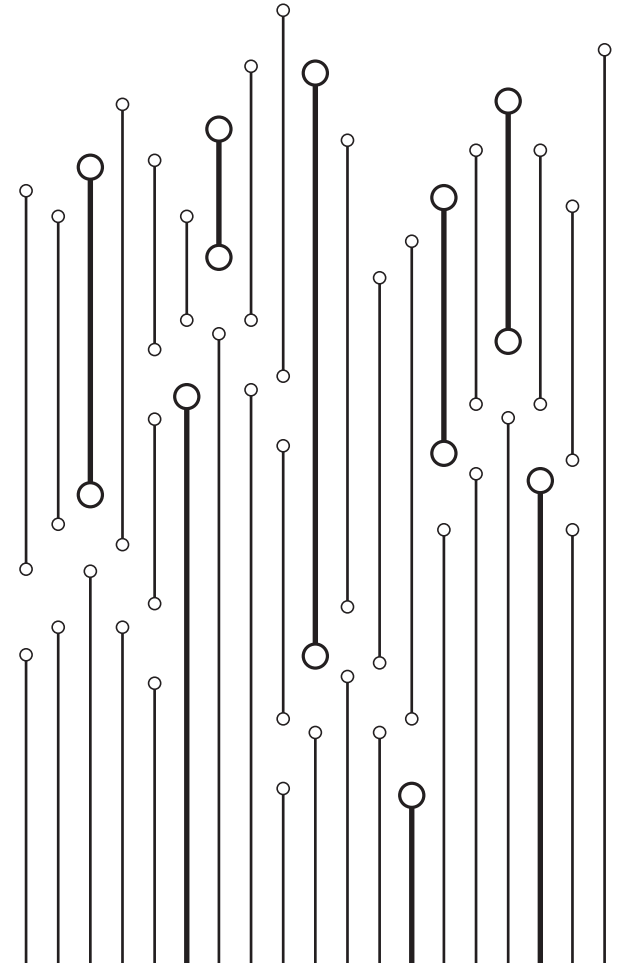
www.sfhiv.org



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Harm Reduction

Focusing On Risk Prevention



What is Harm Reduction?

Harm Reduction is a set of strategies that encourage clients to reduce the harm to themselves and their communities, even if they are unable to eliminate harm by abstaining from a risky behavior. While abstinence from a risky behavior is the highest form of harm reduction, improvements in personal and public health can occur without it.

Harm Reduction promotes the individual right to health and well being as well as a belief in people's competency to protect themselves, their loved ones and their communities.

The guiding principle of Harm Reduction is that any positive change in the life of a client is a good one.

Other Harm Reduction principles include;

- Culturally competent, non-judgmental services, delivered in a manner that demonstrates respect for individual dignity, personal strength, and self-determination.
- Interventions to reduce the economic, social and physical consequences of drug and alcohol related harm and harms associated with other behaviors or practices that put individuals at risk.
- Creative new strategies to engage, motivate, and intervene with difficult to reach potential clients.
- Strategies that reduce harm for those who are unable or unwilling to modify their unsafe behavior.
- Relapse or periods of return to unsafe health practices should not be equated with "failure of treatment."
- People change in incremental ways and must be offered a range of treatment outcomes.

Who uses Harm Reduction?

This method was first used in HIV/AIDS prevention through working with injection drug users to reduce HIV risks by providing clean syringes and other injection equipment. Harm Reduction is now supported by the San Francisco Department of Public Health as a primary method of substance abuse treatment and education and HIV/STI treatment and prevention services. Syringe exchange and disposal sites are located across the city (see resources on back panel) and retail pharmacies can now sell syringes without prescriptions in San Francisco.

Harm Reduction steps:

- Know your status—get tested for HIV and STI's
- If HIV+, consider starting treatment to suppress your viral load and further decrease HIV transmission risk
- Use a clean needle, syringe and other injection equipment every time—use needle exchange & disposal sites
- Limit the harm from substance use through whatever means might work best for you, even if you can not stop using completely, each step in reducing harm is a positive one
- Talk about & support Harm Reduction strategies with your friends, youth, and everyone you know
- Participate in community events that advocate for Harm Reduction strategies such as Safe Injection Centers
- Organize, advocate, and lead events and activities that support people to take control of the conditions that determine their health and the well-being of their communities

Harm Reduction scenarios

Here are some examples of how Harm Reduction strategies may work:

HIV Prevention

You are in a primary, committed, and open relationship which means that both you and your partner have other sexual partners outside the relationship. If using condoms ALL THE TIME is not a realistic goal, you and your primary partner may commit to use condoms, especially for anal sex, with all outside partners to reduce your risk of HIV infection.

Injection Drug Users

You are "not ready" to completely stop shooting meth but you want to reduce the harm and risk that comes along with its use. Bring your own needles and condoms to any event or situation where you may be using.

Alcohol and Sex

You like to have a few drinks to get comfortable in social-sexual situations. Ask a buddy/friend to come along and check-in with you about (NOT) taking that last drink that you know from experience may lead to risky sexual situations.

What is Your Scenario?

What steps can you put in place to reduce the harm of any risky behavior?