



Harm Reduction Program

Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with substance use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.

We accept that some people use drugs and that drug use plays some role in their lives. Accepting substance use means acknowledging it, not necessarily promoting it. Harm reduction neither condones nor condemns any behaviour.



We meet people where they are at. Accepting all people from all walks of life, at all stages of substance use.

How does Harm Reduction Work?

By incorporating strategies on a continuum from safer drug use, to managed substance use, up to abstinence, harm reduction practice helps clients affect positive changes in their lives. The harm reduction philosophy embraces respect, trust and a non-judgmental stance as the essential components of an effective relationship. A basic assumption in this approach is that clients want to make positive changes and the staff uses motivational strategies to help clients move along the change continuum as far as possible.

What types of Harm Reduction services are available at Vermont CARES?

The Syringe Services Program (SSP), or otherwise known as the Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) is the cornerstone of Vermont CARES Harm Reduction Program. We provide free and anonymous access to sterile syringes and safer injection supplies, safe disposal of sharps, overdose reversal kits (Narcan), HIV and HCV counselling & testing, linkage to HCV treatment, referrals to health care and substance use treatment options, personal care items & safer sex supplies.

“SSPs [syringe services programs] are widely considered to be an effective way of reducing HIV transmission among individuals who inject illicit drugs and there is ample evidence that SSPs also promote entry and retention into treatment.” —*U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin, Federal Register, February 2011*

What does the research say?

Harm Reduction and Treatment – According to a 2004 publication from the WHO, there is evidence that SEPs can increase recruitment into drug treatment, and possibly also into primary health care. A 1995 Seattle study found that participants in SEPs were five times more likely to enter drug treatment than non-participant injecting drug users.

Vermont CARES has offices in Burlington, Montpelier, Rutland and Saint Johnsbury. We are the largest and longest serving AIDS Service Organization in the state of Vermont. Each year we serve over 5,000 of our neighbors needing information, support, prevention, and care regarding HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and Harm Reduction services.

How to connect with our programs?

Call our main number at 802-345-4601 and choose the location nearest you.

To contact Theresa Vezina, Program Manager 802-748-6802