




**THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND YOU**

## REDUCING HARM, IMPROVING HEALTH IN HOWARD COUNTY

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Harm Reduction Program Administrator



Promote. Preserve. Protect.  
hchealth.org  

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### WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?


1. Providing services to people who are actively using drugs, without the expectation that they stop using drugs; and,
2. Engaging people who use drugs in a non-judgmental, non-stigmatizing manner.



**HARM REDUCTION, THE INTERVENTIONS**

*Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use.*

Source: Harm Reduction Coalition





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### WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION? A PARABLE

- A parable: Millions of Marylanders like to play in the water in the summer – at the beach, in lakes, ponds and pools. But over the last five years in Maryland, each year an average of almost 8 children under 18 drowned!
- Historically, one response to such tragedies was to pass a criminal law. You can imagine a politician saying, "If my law to make swimming and wading a crime saves the life of just one innocent child, it will be worth it!"
- And because providing lifeguards would "enable" dangerous behavior in the water, that needs to be banned. Such a prohibition almost certainly would reduce the number of persons who go in the water. **But it would also make swimming more dangerous. The number of drownings might actually increase.**



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WITHOUT HARM REDUCTION, HOW DO WE CURRENTLY ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS (PWID)?

1/23/19 HOWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT Infectious Disease Prevention and Health Services [hchealth.org](http://hchealth.org)

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CURRENT LANDSCAPE FOR PWID

Public Health: Prevention Law Enforcement: Arrest Incarceration Public Health: Treatment

HOWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT PWID = People Who Inject Drugs [hchealth.org](http://hchealth.org)

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REIMAGINED LANDSCAPE FOR PWID

Public Health: Harm Reduction

Public Health: Prevention Law Enforcement: Arrest Incarceration Public Health: Treatment

HOWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT [hchealth.org](http://hchealth.org)

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### KEYS TO HARM REDUCTION

- Work with populations who may not be ready to stop substance use – offering individuals strategies to reduce risks while still using substances. Strategies include **outreach and education programs, needle/syringe exchange programs, overdose prevention education, and access to naloxone** to reverse potentially lethal opioid overdose.
- These strategies are designed to **reduce substance misuse and its negative consequences** for the users and those around them, such as transmission of HIV and other infectious diseases. They also seek to **help individuals engage in treatments to reduce, manage, and stop their substance use when appropriate.**
- Harm Reduction:
  - "Meeting people where they're at"
  - Compassionate/Non-judgmental
  - Reducing stigma
  - Inclusive and culturally competent- race, religion, nationality, LGBTQ+
  - Utilizing Peer Support Staff
  - Improving Health/Reducing Costs: there's compelling evidence that syringe services programs are a cost-effective means of reducing HIV/HCV transmissions and other negative health consequences without increasing existing drug use; some cost-effectiveness analyses have estimated that syringe access programs can save thousands of dollars per client.



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### PRINCIPLES OF HARM REDUCTION

-Accepts, for better and or worse, that **licit and illicit drug use is part of our world and chooses to work to minimize its harmful effects** rather than simply ignore or condemn them.

-Understands **drug use as a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon that encompasses a continuum of behaviors** from severe abuse to total abstinence, and acknowledges that some ways of using drugs are clearly safer than others.

-Establishes **quality of individual and community life and well-being**—not necessarily cessation of all drug use—as the criteria for successful interventions and policies.

-Calls for the **non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services** and resources to people who use drugs and the communities in which they live in order to assist them in reducing attendant harm.  
(1 of 2)




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### PRINCIPLES OF HARM REDUCTION

-Ensures that drug users and those with a history of drug use routinely have a **real voice in the creation of programs and policies** designed to serve them.

-Affirms **drugs users themselves as the primary agents of reducing the harms of their drug use**, and seeks to empower users to share information and support each other in strategies which meet their actual conditions of use.

-Recognizes that the realities of **poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination and other social inequalities affect both people's vulnerability** to and capacity for effectively dealing with drug-related harm.

-**Does not attempt to minimize or ignore the real and tragic harm and danger** associated with licit and illicit drug use.  
(2 of 2)

Source: [harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction](http://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction)




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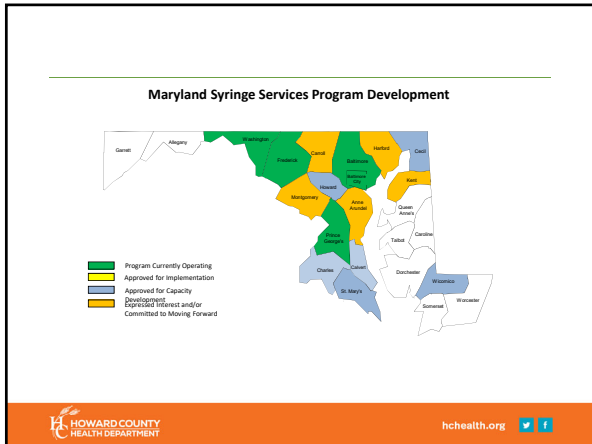
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**NEXT STEPS FOR HOWARD COUNTY**

- Currently: Capacity Development; Information will be used to develop the County's application to MDH, proposal for operations
- Approved application = funding, authorization to operate SSP in Howard County
- Training staff, offering initial services, potential expansion

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO GET INVOLVED:**

- Contact:  
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410-313-5902

Thank you!

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