

POINT SOURCE YOUTH ON
BEHALF OF OCFS PRESENTS:

THE HOW-TO'S OF HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction includes a range of policies, programs, and practices that meet marginalized communities like runaway and homeless youth where they're at. Harm reduction practices are designed to acknowledge and reduce the risks young people face every day by developing youth-centered strategies to enhance safety in ways that work for them. Learn how to embed harm reduction techniques into your work with youth during COVID-19 and beyond to create brave spaces where youth get the care and services they deserve.

Van Asher, Harm Reduction
Coordinator, *Cylar House Community
Health Center*

Pixie Pearl, Director, *California
Homeless Youth Project*

Milo Edwards, Youth Advocacy,
*Washington State Youth for
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Larissa Lozada, Founder, *Ground-up*
and Youth Director, *60 Crises*

**“Harm
reduction
is actually
unconditional
love.”**

— VAN ASHER



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Q & A

What does harm reduction look like when working with youth, especially during a pandemic?

Harm reduction for young people is built on the awareness that youth are the experts in their lives. It's important to recognize the power dynamics that exist between providers and clients to follow directives to be okay. Providers should set aside program expectations and follow youth's lead by being flexible, thinking outside the box, utilizing different ways of communication and taking a step back to recognize that youth have autonomy over their lives and the goals they want to achieve for themselves.

Harm reduction can feel intimidating at first. We often hear concerns about liability or youth safety. What is your response to those concerns?

The unknown is scary! Try relating harm reduction to something that is understandable and break it down into a concept that is easier to digest. One example of this is tanning bed usage, and the various risks associated,

including cancer. A harm reduction approach to supporting someone using tanning beds might include considering reducing the frequency of tanning salon visits, applying a light protective layer of spf beforehand, and discussing other best practices that create safer avenues for enjoying this behavior. Using every-day examples of harm reduction can help clients understand how often we use harm reduction in our lives already. These examples also help to highlight how making small changes can help us all create safer and healthier lives. Defining our ethics by what is legal is not a helpful framework in these scenarios. Many millionaires engage in substance usage without much shame or scrutiny, so in situations where we are working with young people experiencing homelessness or housing instability we need to reflect on our own biases and ask ourselves why ethics are connected?



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Actions to Take Now

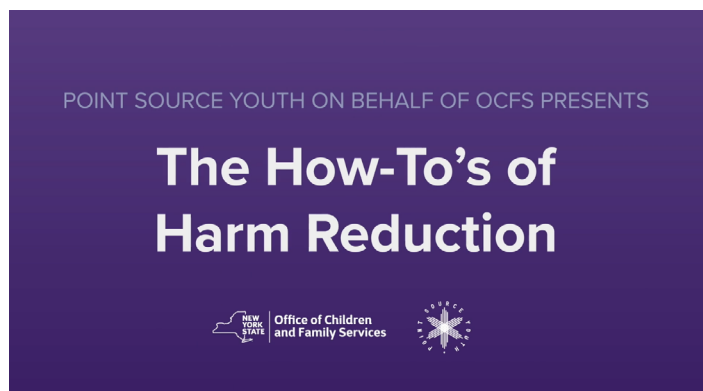
1. **Identify** your local harm reduction coalitions and syringe exchange programs and build partnerships. These programs exist all over the country and are vital resources for young people in your community.
2. **Utilize** principles of motivational interviewing in the assessment and discussion of potentially harmful health behaviors with youth. Lead with empathy and understanding as you work with youth clients to ensure they feel autonomous and empowered.
3. **Build** a Harm Reduction Community! Employ youth with lived experiences of substance use, homelessness and housing instability in your organization. Remember that lived experience is just as, if not more important than degrees.



RESOURCES

- [Principles of Harm Reduction in Young Adults with SUD | HealthCity](#)
- [Harm Reduction Principles | National Harm Reduction Coalition](#)
- [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#)
- [Harm Reduction Presentation](#)
- [Harm Reduction Therapy](#)
- [Never Use Alone - \(800\) 484-3731](#)
- [A Harm Reduction Minute](#)
- [The Young Injectables Meet the Overdose Avengers](#)
- [Naloxone Explainer Video](#)
- [Naloxone "Breaking the Stigma"](#)
- [Harm Reduction & Abstinence Based Treatment, 'Bridging the Gap'](#)
- [Using Urine Drug Test Strips as a Harm Reduction Tool](#)
- [PrEP & PEP 'the Straight Dope'](#)
- [The Young Injectables](#)
- [The Harm Reduction Training Manual](#)

Access the full 60-minute training [here](#).



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