

# Harm Reduction is Essential



# WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?

Harm reduction is an evidence-based approach to substance use that strives to reduce the health and social harms arising from substance use in a client centered way.

Harm reduction policies, programs, and practices take a judgement free and non-coercive approach to supporting people who use drugs. Increases in well-being - as opposed to strictly a cessation focus - are viewed as metrics of success for harm reduction programs.

# HARM REDUCTION IN EVERY DAY LIFE

While we focus on harm reduction in the context of substance use, it can be helpful to remember that examples of harm reduction are around us all the time.

Wearing a seat belt, putting on sunscreen at the beach, or strapping on a helmet before a hockey game are all ways of reducing harm.

People who use drugs deserve the same support for a health centered approach to reducing harm as we treat so many other health related areas with.

# HARM REDUCTION PROGRAMS

Some examples of harm reduction programs directly related to substance use are:

- Naloxone distribution
- Overdose prevention sites
- Safer supply programs
- Drug checking services
- Needle/syringe distribution
- Opioid agonist therapy (OAT)



All these programs are evidence-based approaches to reducing the harms experienced by people who use drugs.

# HARM REDUCTION SAVES LIVES

In the face of the on-going unregulated and increasingly toxic drug supply that has caused thousands of preventable deaths, harm reduction is an essential and proven part of the solution.

Harm reduction initiatives save lives and need to be a thoroughly funded in order to achieve the goal of equitable health and well-being for everyone living in Ontario.