

Harm Reduction Strategies

From the Opioid Crisis Response Plan | Colorado Department of Law

Harm reduction seeks to incorporate several strategies for reducing or mitigating the negative consequences associated with opioid and co-occurring substance use. Harm reduction's foundational principles are focused on social justice, respect for substance users, and meeting substance users "where they're at." Many Colorado communities have adopted harm reduction strategies and programs, including Narcan distribution and opioid disposal programs. A substance user's first interaction with a harm reduction specialist is often that person's first step on the road to treatment and recovery.

The Attorney General does not endorse any specific harm reduction strategy but recognizes the positive impacts harm reduction may have on substance users, when implemented properly, according to the law, and with community buy-in. Many of the suggestions in this OCR Plan are harm reduction strategies.

The OCR plan suggests State and local leaders collaborate to consider harm reduction strategies such as the following for their communities:



Expand access to opioid overdose reversal medications:

Increase access to naloxone for those affected by the opioid disorder, including healthcare workers, patients, first responders, and members of the public



Provide Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT):¹

- Offering effective strategies for families to help loved ones receive treatment
- Reducing drug and alcohol use by loved ones, even if not participating in treatment
- Improving the lives of concerned family and friends



Support staffing, supply, and space needs for harm reduction organizations:

Connections to care, including:

- Referrals to treatment
- Referrals for healthcare
- Referrals for behavioral health
- Safe syringe disposal and access
- Fentanyl checking and testing strips

¹ CRAFT Family Support. (2020, December 30). Retrieved January 7, 2021, from <https://www.overdoselifeline.org/craft-family-support/>



Support mobile units that offer or provide referrals to harm reduction services



Training relevant professionals and other affected persons on harm reduction strategies:

- Healthcare providers
- Students
- Families affected by opioid use disorder
- Peer recovery coaches
- Recovery outreach specialists
- Other professionals that provide care to persons who use opioids or persons with OUD and any co-occurring SUDs or mental health conditions



Create partnerships with stakeholders to educate and reduce the stigma of harm reduction:

- Treatment providers
- Healthcare providers and professionals
- Law Enforcement and Diversion (LEAD) programs
- Public health departments
- Pharmacists
- Business communities
- Community centers and libraries
- K-12 and higher education institutions



Provide testing for, and education on, infectious diseases transmitted by injecting opiates and other opioid-related high-risk behaviors (e.g., HIV, Hepatitis, Hepatitis C and other infectious diseases).²

² National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020, April 30). Colorado: Opioid-Involved Deaths and Related Harms. Retrieved February 8, 2021, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/opioids/opioid-summaries-by-state/colorado-opioid-involved-deaths-related-harms>.