

Technical Assistance Collaborative Community Learning Series Webinar Highlights Medications for Opioid Use Disorder and Harm Reduction | April 16, 2024

What is Harm Reduction?

A set of **ideas**, **values** and **evidence-based strategies** aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use.

Principles of Harm Reduction

1. **Accepts** that drug use is part of our world and chooses to work to **minimize** its harmful effects rather than simply ignore or condemn them
2. **Acknowledges** that some ways of using drugs are **safer** than others
3. Establishes **quality of life**, not necessarily cessation of all drug use, as the criteria for successful interventions and policies
4. Calls for the **non-judgmental** provision of services/resources
5. Ensures people who use/have used drugs have a **voice** in the creation of programs and policies designed to serve them
6. **Affirms** people who use drugs as the **primary agents** of reducing the harms of their drug use
7. **Recognizes** the effect of social inequalities on people's vulnerability to and capacity for effectively dealing with drug-related harm
8. Does not attempt to minimize or ignore the danger of drug use

Harm Reduction Services

- [Syringe Service Program](#)
- [Naloxone](#)
- [Medication Treatment](#)
- [Supervised Consumption Services](#)
- [Fentanyl Testing](#)

Evidence of Effectiveness

- Individuals who participate in syringe programs are 5x more likely to decrease or cease drug use and seek treatment compared to those who do not utilize such programs.
- Overdose prevention sites, often referred to as "safe injection sites," are proven to reduce overdose deaths and overall mortality rates while remaining cost-effective.
- Distribution of naloxone and overdose education programs effectively decrease deaths caused by overdose.

Resources:

- [Find Harm Reduction Services Near You](#)
- [Syringe Service Program Locations](#)
- [Request Naloxone](#)

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What are Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)?

MOUD are FDA-approved treatments for opioid use disorder (OUD). Also referred to as medication-assisted treatment (MAT) or medications for addiction treatment, these include **methadone**, **buprenorphine** and **naltrexone**. These medications are vital for helping individuals manage and recover from OUD.

Methadone & Buprenorphine

- Methadone and buprenorphine are known as "**opioid agonist treatments**" (OAT).
- Work to reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms, making them effective for managing opioid use disorder.
- Patients are encouraged to continue using methadone or buprenorphine as long as they find the treatment beneficial, which can lead to lower rates of relapse and better health outcomes.

Resources:

[MDHHS Appropriations bill: Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Addiction](#)
[Michigan Safer Opioid Prescribing Toolkit - Medication for Opioid Use Disorder](#)

Naltrexone

- Naltrexone is an **opioid antagonist**.
- Less effective than opioid agonist treatments (OAT) like buprenorphine and methadone because it requires a 7–10 day opioid detox, which increases the risk of relapse and overdose.
- Only 72% of patients are able to start naltrexone treatment, compared to 94% for buprenorphine and methadone.
- Combining naltrexone with counseling is more effective than counseling alone for certain populations, such as individuals under criminal justice supervision.

Evidence of Effectiveness

Methadone and buprenorphine are **highly effective** treatments for opioid use disorders (OUDs), often considered the **gold standard of care**. They surpass counseling alone by significantly increasing retention in treatment, and reducing drug use, overdose risks and criminal activities.