



## What is harm reduction?

No universally accepted definition

Common themes throughout all definitions

## Streetworks Edmonton- harm reduction definition

Thoughtful, just and science-based approach to drugs.

Policies, strategies and services that aim to assist people live safer and healthier lives.

Reduction of drug use is a personal choice- not expected or required in a harm reduction approach.

Enhances ability of people who use substances to have increased control over their lives and health.

## Alberta Health Services- harm reduction definition

Policies, programs and practices that aim to reduce adverse health, social or economic consequences of substances without necessarily reducing consumption.

Accepts that abstinence may or may not be a realistic or desirable goal for an individual patient.

Cessation of substance use is not a prerequisite to access health or social services.

# Principles of Harm Reduction

Pragmatism

Human Rights/Humane Values

Focus on Harms

Flexibility and Maximization of Intervention Options

Priority of Immediate Goals

Evaluation

Lived experience involvement

# Harm Reduction in Practice



- **Critical Self-Reflection**
- **Nonjudgmental & Non-stigmatizing Approach**
- **Effective Verbal and Non-verbal Communication**
- **Building Rapport & Trust**
- **Accepting Feedback**
- **Patience**
- **Cultural Safety**
- **Trauma Informed Care**
- **Removing Barriers**
- **Process vs. Outcome**
- **Advocacy**
- **Social Justice**

# Harm Reduction Services Examples



Awareness Campaigns



Peer Support & Outreach



Supply Distribution & Recovery



Education



Naloxone Kits



Designated Drivers

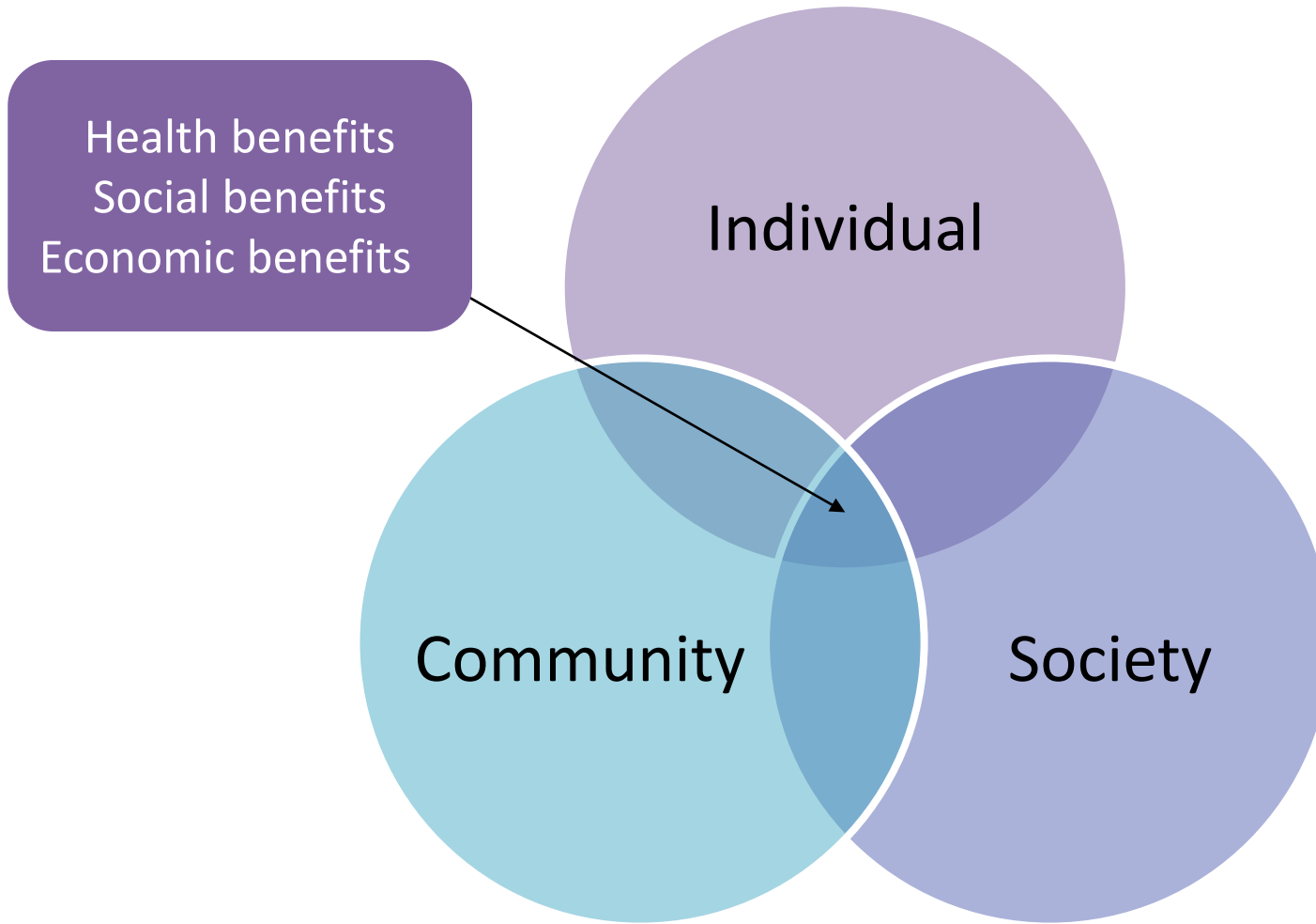


Condoms



Supervised consumption sites

# Benefits of Harm Reduction exist at many levels



(Newcombe, 2010)



“Clients with a substance use disorder are more likely to be perceived by health-care providers as having personal control over their illness and, therefore, are more likely to be held responsible and blamed.”

RNAO (2015)



# Impact of Stigma

Stigma affects how we conceptualize, frame and prioritize the current opioid overdose crisis.

Stigma leads to hiding and creates barriers to help seeking.

Stigma contributes to ongoing system mistrust and avoidance of services, particularly among marginalized populations.

Stigma results in poorer quality care and response.

## Take Home Messages

- ✓ Substance use and substance use disorders are complex and multi-factorial.
- ✓ Harm reduction is an important component in the continuum of care.
- ✓ Incorporating culturally safe care, trauma-informed care and harm reduction leads to positive outcomes for both patients and providers.

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