SHARP
SUMMARY REPORT NETWORK
Findings from Qualitative Interviews
with Harm Reduction Practitioners in Central Appalachia

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We interviewed a total of 46 harm reduction practitioners and 16 policy experts working across seven Central Appalachian states.
We asked interviewees a series of questions about best practices for harm reduction, barriers to services, and what they would like from a peer resource sharing network.

1. What coalitions are doing harm reduction work in our target states?

2. What harm reduction strategies are effective or showing promise in communities in states we defined as part of Central Appalachia (NC, TN, WV, VA, GA, OH, KY)?

3. What advice do established programs have regarding starting and sustaining harm reduction programs?

4. How do potential network members want to engage with a regional peer learning network?

5. How can a learning network benefit potential members?
WHAT DID WE HEAR?

BEST PRACTICES

Interviewees frequently described well-known pillars of harm reduction as best practices, including:

- Providing respectful, non-stigmatizing care
- Ensuring that services are low-barrier
- Staffing people with lived experience
- Learning from participants
- Needing to build trust and community

ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

Interviewees discussed many challenges related to starting and sustaining a harm reduction organization. During start-up, these challenges include:

- Building trust with participants
- Engaging the community
- Navigating political "red tape," such as receiving approval from state or local governmental bodies
- Finding funding (including for syringes)

In terms of sustaining a program, interviewees described challenges related to identifying stable funding streams and responding to COVID-19

DESIRED SERVICES

Interviewees desired different services, often very dependent on their local context. The three most common responses were the following:

- Adding mobile services to their program
- Increasing the scope of direct services offered by their program (including HIV and Hepatitis C testing, wound care, vaccination, and case management)
- Addressing social determinants of health (i.e., housing, employment and health insurance)

BARRIERS TO SERVICE PROVISION

Interviewees reported a range of barriers to providing effective services, including:

- Restrictive laws and punitive drug policies
- Lack of willing community partners, or openly hostile ones
- Lack of resources and/or political will to address root causes of addiction
- Stigma towards people who use drugs and harm reduction programs
- Barriers related to rural contexts, such as heightened fear of exposure due to small community size and lack of transportation to increase access to services
### What's Next?

#### What Did You Ask For?

- **Best practices**: Learning what other harm reductionists do that works
- **Organizational support**: Identifying grant opportunities, managing volunteers, providing emotional support to staff, connecting with affordable supply chains
- **Service Expansion**: Providing wound care, setting up quick response teams, offering linkage to care, adding mobile units
- **Local trends**: Identifying local trends of drug supplies and infections
- **Advocacy**: Building coalitions of stakeholders, learning community organizing strategies, navigating political processes

#### What Will the Network Offer?

- **Kick-off Gathering**: Convening a virtual kick-off gathering of network members in 2021
- **Network Newsletter**: Sending a periodic newsletter with updates about grant opportunities, advocacy techniques, and network offerings
- **Online Platform**: Creating an online platform to store resources (such as successful grant proposals, organizing materials, etc.) and facilitate connections between harm reductionists
- **Webinars**: Offering capacity-building webinars on various topics (e.g., best practices, community organizing strategies, tips for writing successful grants, etc.)
- **Any suggestions?** We are open to suggestions of how else we can support network members!
We look forward to working with you as part of the network! We will be emailing you our upcoming newsletter and invitation to the network kick-off gathering soon.

CONTACT US!

Please reach out with any questions or comments you may have!

You can reach out to Regina Musa, our Outreach and Network Coordinator, at reginael@email.unc.edu