

# MYTHS AND FACTS: UNDERSTANDING HARM REDUCTION APPROACHES

Harm reduction is an evidence-based approach that reduces the health and social harms of substance use. It promotes safer practices and connects people to care. Harm reduction includes strategies such as distributing sterile equipment, naloxone and overdose prevention education, and referrals to health and social services. It is also a relationship-based approach built on dignity and connection, recognizing that everyone is deserving of support.

**As our community continues to experience a toxic drug supply, harm reduction is a critical tool — alongside prevention, treatment, and recovery — to keep people safe, build trust, and strengthen our collective ability to respond.**

## MYTH

## FACT

Harm reduction encourages substance use and prevents people from accessing treatment



Research consistently shows that harm reduction service, such as supervised consumption sites, naloxone distribution, and supply distribution, do not increase drug use. Instead, these approaches reduce deaths, and connect people with healthcare and treatment options.

Harm reduction only benefits people who use substances



Harm reduction prevents disease transmission, decreases emergency service use, and helps connect people to housing, health care, and social supports, which can improve community safety and wellbeing.

Most people who use substances don't want help



People use substance for many reasons, and support can look different for everyone. Often stigma, fear, and lack of accessible services can create barriers. Harm reduction builds trust and provides an entry point to treatment options.

Providing harm reduction supplies is not a good use of taxpayer money



Harm reduction is cost-effective and helps save significant health-care and emergency response costs. By preventing drug poisonings and infections like HIV and hepatitis C, it also reduces long-term pressures on the health system.

### Sources:

- [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction \(CCSA\)](#)
- [Health Canada](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)