

# Out of Harm's Way

*Promoting Health and Wellness  
for Clients and their Families*



Fraser Health views addiction as a health problem and believes that clients challenged by addiction need health care services to help them be well.

We know that some people who use drugs and alcohol may not want to, or be able to, stop using altogether. Or some people who have tried, may need help if they relapse.

The health authority's approach is to not judge our clients, but to find ways to be sure they remain as healthy as possible, and provide a range of services to meet their needs and goals.

approach empowers clients to set their own goals, while our services support our clients to achieve them. The Harm Reduction Policy ensures that all providers of addiction services accept clients, whether or not their goal is to stop using drugs or alcohol.

Harm reduction is a practical response that focuses on keeping people safe and minimizing injury, disease and death that can result from substance use.

## **What is harm reduction?**

Harm reduction is a practical response that focuses on keeping people safe and minimizing injury, disease and death that can result from substance use. Harm reduction recognizes abstinence as a possible outcome for some people, but the person doesn't have to make a commitment to

Recently, Fraser Health adopted a Harm Reduction Policy. This approach recognizes our clients' strengths and needs, and meets our clients wherever they are in their course of recovery. The



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permanent abstinence to receive health care and treatment. For our clients, this means they can receive services and support to become and stay well. For their families, it means they know their loved one is receiving health care focused on reducing the likelihood of harm.

Reducing harm is an approach that is not confined to addictions alone. Activities such as hand washing is a way to reduce the harm that could come from spreading disease. Seat belts, and bike helmets are other examples of harm reduction measures.

### What are harm reduction activities related to drug use?

**For clients who use drugs, harm reduction activities can include:**

- Services that provide clean needles
- The medical prescription of heroin for people who do not respond to other treatments
- Substituting the legal, non-injection drug methadone for heroin along with education, support and counseling services

- Outreach and education to encourage safer behaviours in people that use drugs
- Safe consumption sites. (This service does not currently exist in Fraser Health.)

#### **These kind of activities help to:**

- Provide education about safer injection and safer sex
- Reduce needle sharing
- Reduce injection drug use in public places

- Reduce the transfer of blood-borne viruses like HIV and hepatitis C
- Reduce overdose deaths
- Increase referrals to drug treatment programs
- Increase employment among people who use drugs, and
- Reduce crime.

Research shows that up to 80 per cent of substance users in harm reduction programs refrain from entering into further risky behaviors, such as sharing syringes, reckless driving, criminal activities and risky sexual activities.

#### **For more information**

If you have questions or comments, or would like more information about Fraser Health's approach to harm reduction, please contact Dr. Akbar Bayanzadeh, Fraser Health Addictions Leader at 604 587 4685.



A harm reduction approach recognizes an individual's strengths and needs, and meets them wherever they are in their course of recovery.

