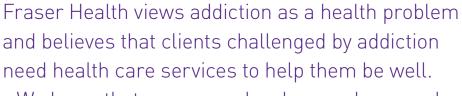
Out of Harm's Way

Promoting Health and Wellness for Clients and their Families



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.

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

> 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

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.

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



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.



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, noninjection drug methadone for heroin along with education, support and counseling services



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

- 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 bloodborne 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.

