

Talking Points

The language we use matters. As partners in harm reduction, we play a powerful role in shifting harmful narratives about people who use drugs. Challenging stigmas around drug use is an important component of our work. Please use these talking points to help guide conversations within your organization and your community.

About the need

- We believe everyone in Oregon deserves to have their health and dignity supported.
- Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Oregon was already in an overdose crisis. Today, the situation is much worse.
- Disruption in treatment and recovery services, coupled with social isolation, job loss and community trauma have left many struggling.
- We know we must do more to support people in preventing overdose and reducing the risk of infection.
- People who use drugs need support and can reduce their risk of death and other harmful effects related to drug use, such as HIV and hepatitis C.
- Every life is worth saving — and there's no wrong way to seek hope, healing and health.

About harm reduction

- For people who use drugs, supporting them in preventing overdoses and adopting safer use practices is a proven step toward hope, healing and health.
- Harm reduction recognizes and supports an individual's agency to reduce the risks associated with drug use and makes our communities safer.
- Harm reduction supports the agency of people who use drugs by making safer use supplies easily accessible — like medication to reverse an overdose and new syringes — and providing connections to social services, medical care, treatment and more.
- Harm reduction is proven to save lives. For example, syringe service programs are proven to reduce HIV and hepatitis C infection rates by about 50 percent.
- Harm reduction works. That's why support for these evidence-based strategies continues to grow as more communities embrace harm reduction as a critical step along the continuum of care.
- We need every road to health to remain open and available to people who use drugs — from prevention and treatment to recovery support and harm reduction.