

Principles of Harm Reduction and its Application to Anti-Trafficking Work



Guest Presenters from the
Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition

Hosted by the
Human Trafficking Prevention Project

Agenda

- Presentation by Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition
 - Rajani Gudlavalleti (Director of Mobilization) (she/her/hers)
 - Harriet Smith (Director of Education) (she/her/hers)
 - Owen O’Keefe (Community Outreach Coordinator) (he/him/his)
- Discussion on integration of harm reduction principles into anti-trafficking client services and advocacy

Principles of Harm Reduction

Application for Anti-Trafficking Work

Harriet Smith, she/her/hers -- Director of Education

Rajani Gudlavalleti, she/her/hers -- Director of Mobilization

Owen O'Keefe, he/him/his -- Community Outreach Coordinator

A red circular logo with the text "BALTIMORE HARM REDUCTION COALITION" inside in red, uppercase letters.

BALTIMORE
HARM
REDUCTION
COALITION

Welcome!

You're in the right place if ...

- You want to learn about (more) harm reduction
- You care about people and you want to build a world without oppression

Basic Flow

- PowerPoint presentation: Harm reduction philosophy and practice
- Panel discussion: Intersection between harm reduction and anti-trafficking work

Cast of Characters

PART 1:

Harriet Smith, she/her/hers -- facilitating the presentation portion

Rajani Gudlavalleti, she/her/hers -- tech for first portion

PART 2: Harriet and Rajani will be joined by ...

Jessica Emerson, she/her/hers -- Director, Human Trafficking Prevention Project, UB School of Law

Heather Heiman, she/her/hers -- Project Manager, Human Trafficking Prevention Project, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service

Owen O'Keefe, he/him/his -- Community Outreach Coordinator, BHRC

We're asking each other to:

Be Present

Write down your questions and your reactions (intellectual and emotional)

What is harm reduction?

Harm reduction focuses on drug use and sexual behaviors (especially sex work), as these are often criminalized and are highly stigmatized.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: harm reduction expands choices, increases access, and promotes opportunities to assist people be safer (particularly when engaging in culturally stigmatized behaviors—such as drug use and sex).

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL: harm reduction aims to shift organizations/ systems (and our broader culture) to be safer for both individuals and communities.

Society, and the systems within it, have historically increased harm to people who use drugs or engage in sex work through oppressive policy and stigmatizing culture.

What are harm reduction services?

What IS harm reduction

- Meeting people where they're at, but not leaving them there
- Avoiding placing judgment on individuals
- Acknowledging the significance of *any* positive change
- Creative and flexible
- Engaging in radical love
- Redistributes power!
- Backed by scientific evidence (and common sense!)

What IS NOT harm reduction

- HR is not simply risk reduction
- HR is not about giving directives/ instructions
- HR is not one size fits all
- HR teaches us that oppressive or coercive policies are harmful
 - This doesn't mean you can't have expectations or rules or that you can't set boundaries
- HR is not sunshine and rainbows all the time

NATIONAL HARM REDUCTION COALITION

PRINCIPLES OF HARM REDUCTION

4: Calls for the **non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services** and resources to people who use drugs and the communities in which they live in order to assist them in reducing attendant harm

5: Ensures that people who use drugs and those with a history of drug use routinely have **a real voice** in the creation of programs and policies designed to serve them

7: Recognizes that **the realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination, and other social inequalities** affect both people's vulnerability to and capacity for effectively dealing with drug-related harm

4: Calls for the **non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services** and resources to people who use drugs and the communities in which they live in order to assist them in reducing attendant harm

**non-judgmental, accurate
information, radical love**

Our systems--overtime and since the founding of those structures--drive demand for kidnapped and coerced laborers.

Harm reduction reminds us that individual behavior does not occur in a vacuum and that laws can limit or enhance our ability to experience safety and wellness.

It is not appropriate though to draw a comparison between drug prohibition and prohibition of harmful practices.

5: Ensures that people who use drugs and those with a history of drug use routinely have a **real voice** in the creation of programs and policies designed to serve them

“nothing about us without us”

from the U.S. disability rights movement

Policies relating to drug use, drug selling, and sex work are routinely made without inclusion of a broad array of voices. In fact, policies are often made despite the organized efforts of people directly impacted telling politicians and advocates that the legislation will cause harm.

It is politically palatable to “save” victims of “drug abuse” or even trafficking but politically risky to undermine systems that cause harm to those same, and certainly politically risky to listen to a broad array of people impacted.

7: Recognizes that **the realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination, and other social inequalities** affect both people's vulnerability to and capacity for effectively dealing with drug-related harm

**context is everything;
there's no easy villain**

Our systems--overtime and since the founding of those structures--drive demand for kidnapped and coerced laborers.

Harm reduction reminds us that individual behavior does not occur in a vacuum and that laws can limit or enhance our ability to experience safety and wellness.

context: criminalization makes us poor analyzers

Not everything that is illegal is
wrong.

Safety doesn't result from
criminalization.

Harm reduction reminds of this.

There are helpful connections between drug policy and anti-trafficking laws. However, anti-drug laws are distinct from anti-trafficking laws because coercive or forced labor is wrong. Consuming drugs is not wrong, however.

context continued: changes in policy

People who use drugs are “monsters”

People who use drugs are “victims”



the whiter the face the more
supposed compassion we muster

but we still need a villain

Groups involved in harm reduction advocacy and service-provision in MD

Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore

Bmore POWER

Power Inside

Communities United

JHSPH/SPARC

SWOP Baltimore

Baltimore Safe Haven

Baltimore Harm
Reduction Coalition

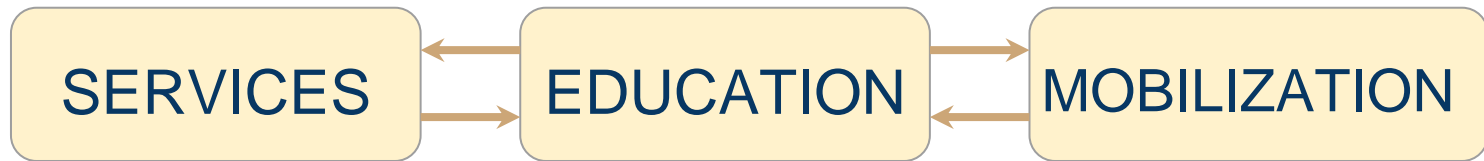
BRIDGES Coalition for OPS

Maryland Harm Reduction
Action Network



What does BHRC do?

We mobilize community members for the health, dignity, and safety of people targeted by the war on drugs and anti sex-worker policies. We advocate for harm reduction as a part of a broader movement for social justice.



Discussion

Please share your questions with
the panel in the chat!

Harm Reduction Resources in Maryland

- **Maryland Harm Reduction Action Network** consists of individuals and organizations committed to promoting the health, dignity, and safety of people who use drugs by educating about, advocating for, and promoting the use of harm reduction principles.
- **Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition** mobilizes community members for the health, dignity, and safety of people targeted by the war on drugs and anti-sex worker policies, and advocates for harm reduction as part of a broader movement for social justice.
 - Website: <https://baltimoreharmreduction.org/>
 - Email: admin@baltimoreharmreduction.org
 - Phone: 410-205-5143
- Learn more about the **Bridges Coalition** at <https://baltimoreharmreduction.org/bridges-coalition/>

Thank you!

For more information about the Human Trafficking Prevention Project, please contact us at:

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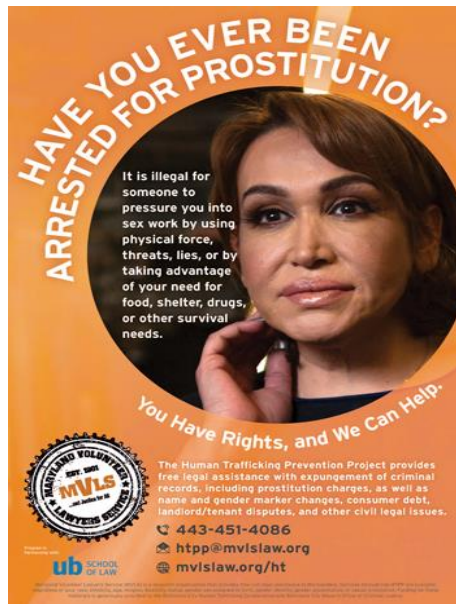


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