Overdose Prevention Sites as a Method of Exploitation and Violence Prevention

Special Guest Presenters from the
Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition:

Rajani Gudlavalleti
Director of Mobilization

Candy Kerr
Communications Manager

Hosted by the Human Trafficking Prevention Project

OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITES AND THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Rajani Gudlavalleti, she/her/hers – director of mobilization, BHRC

Candy Kerr, she/her/hers – communications manager, BHRC

May 18, 2023

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permission can be discussed by emailing:
admin@baltimoreharmreduction.org

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WELCOME!

You're in the right place if ...

- You want to learn (more) about overdose prevention sites/centers and how they can help people you care about

- You want to continue building a strong anti-trafficking movement

Agenda

- Welcome
- Who we are
- What is harm reduction? (a refresher)
- What is an OPS/C?
- Who uses OPS? How can they serve as safe places for people who might be targeted?
- Who advocates for OPS in MD?
- Discussion

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Who are we?

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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.

We advocate for harm reduction as part of a broader movement for social justice.

our three areas of work:
Policy Advocacy, Direct Services, Education

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TODAY WE HAVE ...

Rajani (she), director of mobilization

Rajani (RUH-juh-nee) oversees and coordinates BHRC's community organizing and public policy efforts guided by the voices of community leaders. Prior to joining the organization, Rajani collaborated with BHRC in March 2017 to create the BRIDGES Coalition. In January 2018, she was brought on board, bringing with her over a decade of experience working at the intersections of social justice, public health, and the legal system.

Cola (she), community organizer

Joined BHRC in 2022 with experience in legal advocacy, lived experience, harm reduction and trans and queer led drug policy efforts. She gathers the community for the BRIDGES Coalition. The BRIDGES coalition is dedicated to ending overdose and providing a safe space in which to use drugs in a facility based on PWUD needs.

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TODAY WE HAVE ...

Rajani (she), director of mobilization

Rajani (RUH-juh-nee) oversees BHRC's organizing and policy advocacy efforts. Rajani entered the harm reduction world via sex worker justice work. She collaborated with BHRC in March 2017 to create the BRIDGES Coalition. In January 2018, she was brought on board, bringing with her over a decade of experience working at the intersections of social justice, public health, and the legal system.

Candy(she), communications manager

Communications manager at BHRC, has been working with BRIDGES Coalition since 2018 after joining BHRC. They bring life experience and other things that can't and won't be quantified in a bio.

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WE'RE ASKING EACH OTHER TO:

Be Present

Write questions or requests for clarification in the chat.

Take note of your reactions (intellectual and emotional).

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What is harm reduction?
(a refresher)

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HARM REDUCTION...

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: harm reduction expands choices, increases access, and promotes opportunities to be assisted and assist others increase safety when engaging in drug use and sex work.

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.

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL: harm reduction shifts organizations/ systems (and our broader culture) to be safer for both individuals and communities -- focusing on how we can increase safety by improving the context in which drug use and sex work take place.

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HARM REDUCTION IS:

- Meeting people where they're at, but not leaving them there
- Avoiding placing judgement on individuals
- Acknowledging the significance of any positive change
- Creative and flexible
- Engaging in radical love
- Honors the power individuals have in their own lives + the power groups have in making change!
- Backed by scientific evidence (+ common sense!)

harm reduction IS NOT:

- Not risk reduction (that's a whole amazing world on its own)
- Not about giving forcing or taking away choices
- Not one size fits all
- Not sunshine + rainbows all the time

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What is an OPS/C?

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OPS/SIF/SIS/OPC? SO MANY LETTERS!

overdose prevention sites

- **Essentially a drop-in center where there is semi-private space to use drugs while designated staff supervise**
  - This service can be added to existing brick and mortar service sites, or even mobile services
- **They have: injection, snorting, and other sterile/clean tools, oxygen, narcan, and more**
- **The staff need to be trained, but do not need any special medical licensure**
- **Every site also offers other resources because people also need/want other things, ex: meals, chill out space, case management, healthcare, fun/social activities, etc.**

photo of site in norway

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In the over 200 OPS operating worldwide, no one has died of overdose. Not one.

Image source: *Philadelphia Inquirer.* “What to expect when your city is expecting a supervised injection site: Lessons from around the globe.” June 2019. Updates provided by BHRC, January 2022.

SYDNEY

If you remember nothing else ….

NO ONE HAS EVER EXPERIENCED A FATAL OVERDOSE IN AN OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITE

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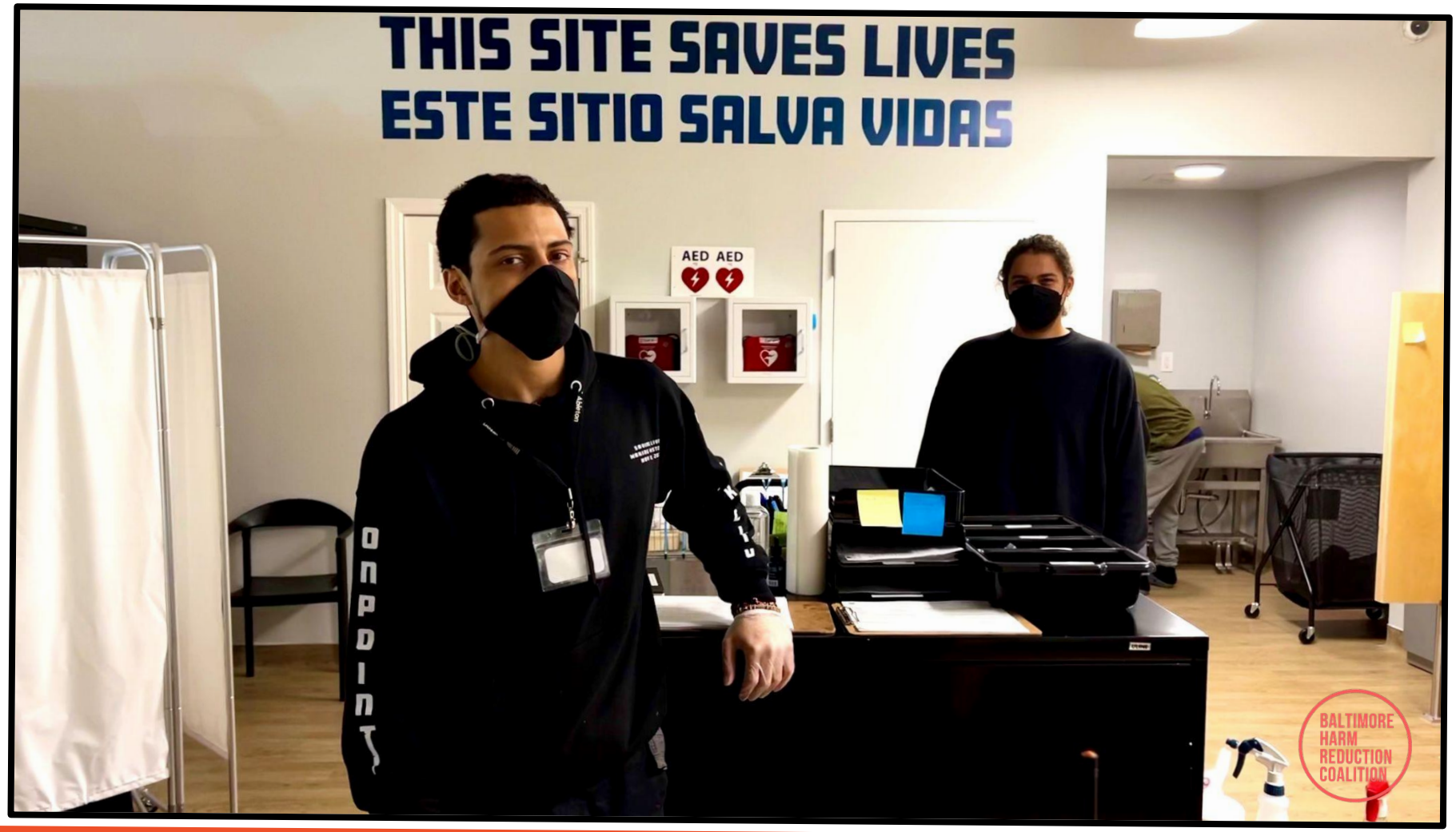
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How it began...

MANHATTAN

Supervised injection sites avert over 100 overdoses, organization says

BY ARNOLD DAVICK | MANHATTAN
PUBLISHED 6:15 PM ET JAN. 24, 2022

The organization operating the nation's first and only sanctioned supervised consumption centers announced a milestone in overdose interventions on Monday.

As of Jan. 23, 114 drug overdoses were averted at the two supervised injection sites in Manhattan, both of which are operated by OnPoint NYC.

The sites, in Washington Heights and East Harlem, first opened on November 30, 2021.

Yesterday, by unanimous vote, the NYC Board of Health issued a statement on taking action to prevent drug overdose deaths (PDF) and urged the federal government and New York State to support overdose prevention centers and other harm reduction services.

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How it's going...

3,258	72,660	898
OPC Participants served since launch in November 30, 2021	OPC Utilizations	Overdose Interventions

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Who uses an OPS/C?

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ADDING THE NEW TO THE OLD (or well-established)

Maryland's community based syringe service providers can give people:

- **safer drug use tools**
- **education on safer injection and/or safer snorting techniques**
- **we can sit with people and provide respite for them to let their guard down for a few moments**

We can do lots of things but we can't be with people when they are most vulnerable – when the are actually using the drugs and the moments right after. How do we grow from what we've rooted?

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OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITES *increasing safety*

For people who are particularly vulnerable to attack or harassment being indoors with safe staff is critical

Some centers across the world make efforts to be especially welcoming to women, trans people of all expressions, and young people by having special days of the week/hours/events for these groups and some centers are only for these groups

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Who advocates for OPS in Maryland?

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BRIDGES COALITION

Dedicated to legal authorization and community-led implementation of OPS in Maryland since March 2017

- **BRIDGES is an advocacy coalition working to end overdose and criminalization by promoting safe spaces, dignity, health, and justice for people who use drugs. We advocate for legal authorization, equitable implementation, and sustainable operation of Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) in Baltimore City and across the state of Maryland.**

MD OPS Bill History

BRIDGES COALITION

2016 (YR 1)

House HGO Cmte by Del. Morhaim with no co-sponsors

2017 (YR 2)

House HGO Cmte by Del. Morhaim with 13 co-sponsors

BRIDGES Coalition is founded to mobilize communities for OPS

2018 (YR 3)

House HGO Cmte by Del. Morhaim with 30 co-sponsors

Senate Finance Cmte by Sen. Feldman with Sen. Mathias as the 1 co-sponsor

2019 (YR 4)

House HGO Cmte by Del. Pena-Melnyk with 31 co-sponsors

Senate Finance Cmte by Sen. Feldman with 9 co-sponsors

2020 (YR 5)

House HGO Cmte by Del. Hettlman with 41 co-sponsors

Senate Finance Cmte by Sen. Hettleman* with 7 co-sponsors

2021 + 2023 (YR 6 + 7)

Yet again, the bill to authorize OPS did not move out of committee.
We will not stop.
Sen Hettleman, Del Pena-Melnyk, Mayor Brandon Scott, & dozens of more are on board for 2024.
Join the movement.

@bridges4ops

tinyurl.com/BRIDGESTube

www.bridges4ops.org

YES! ON MY BLOCK

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- **At the 2020 Senate Finance Committee hearing on SB990 hearing, a legislator on the committee said: “I can’t think of anyone who would want this on their block.”**
- **Dozens of BRIDGES members stated “Yes! I want an OPS on my block!”**

This inspired the **Yes on My Block Campaign** which encompasses a citywide petition, community clean-ups, and partnering with associations and businesses.

YES! ON MY BLOCK

actionnetwork.org/petition/bmore-yes-to-ops

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DISCUSSION / Q&A

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

We continually learn from a number of sources. Particularly dear to us is the work, mentorship, and learning done with OnPoint NYC, Black Harm Reduction Network, and SF Drug User Union

THANK YOU!

Text/Voicemail – 410-205-5143
Social media – @BmoreHRC
Email – admin@baltimoreharmreduction.org

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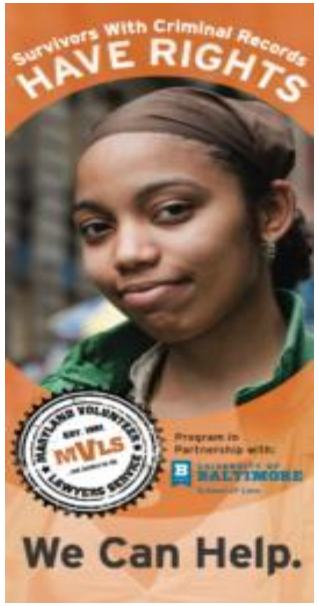
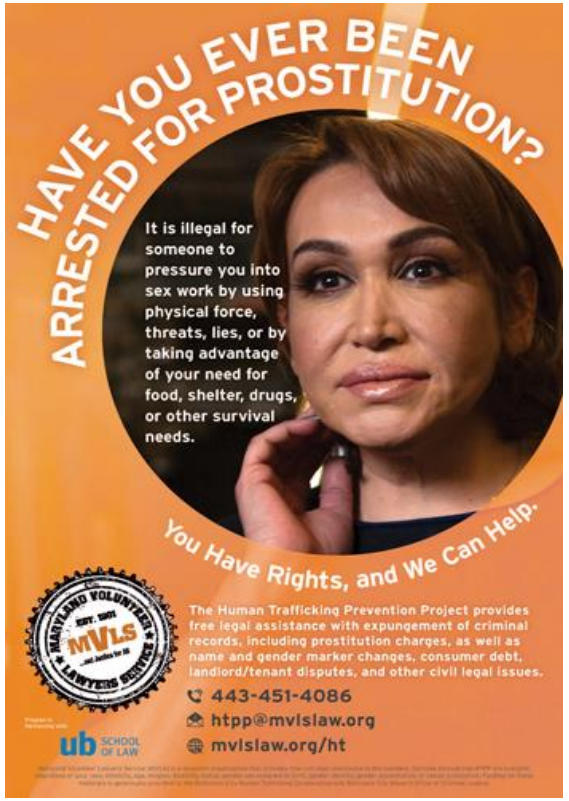
Visit the HTPP Website to Make Referrals and Request Outreach Materials





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