HARM REDUCTION IN CALIFORNIA

The Current Landscape

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National Harm Reduction Coalition creates spaces for **dialogue and action** that help heal the harms caused by racialized drug policies.
HARM REDUCTION IN CA
SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAMS (SSPs)

- SSPs began to proliferate in the 1980s and played a central role in dramatically reducing HIV infection among people who inject drugs.

- Decades of evidence to support the benefits

- Prevent transmission of other infectious diseases (hepatitis C & B), reduce skin and soft tissue infections (SSTIs), and other health conditions including COVID-19 response

- Provide tools and services, care and compassion, Often a point of entry into healthcare and treatment services

Photo: Community Health Project Los Angeles
HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

Syringe Access and Disposal
Safer Drug Use Supplies
Overdose Prevention
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Safer Drug Use Supplies
Overdose Prevention
Safer Sex Materials
Medication for Opioid Use Disorder
Safer Consumption Services
Drop-in Centers
Housing First
Referrals
SSP Growth

- Now 59 programs
- 15 new counties since 2016
- 50% increase in new participants in two years (2015-2017) (CDPH OA)
- Increase in syringes supplied by 53% (2015-17) (CDPH OA)
- Demand has continued to rise, especially since COVID-19.
BARRIERS TO SERVICES
OPPOSITION

- As harm reduction programs have become more pervasive, opposition has grown.
- Stigma and xenophobia are alive and well.
- Makes it hard for programs to focus on providing services, lack of safety for participants.
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CRIMINALIZATION OF PWUD

- AB 2077 makes syringe possession legal, also new health and safety code includes pipes and other drug paraphernalia
- Citations, arrests, confiscation, and intimidation by law enforcement happening every day
- Who is being targeted?

https://healthcarenothandcuffs.wordpress.com/
SUPPLY SHORTAGE

- Clearinghouse supply fund has not kept pace with demand
- 75% of SSPs surveyed will not have enough supplies this year
- Programs unable to follow best practices for distribution
- Still gaps in areas covered, programs can’t expand without funding and supplies
ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE
CALIFORNIA SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS COALITION

- A mutual-aid and advocacy network of SSP providers and participants
- Share knowledge, best practices, resources
- Advocate for policy that advances the rights of PWUD
- Partnered to get $15.2 million of state funds for harm reduction staffing
INTERCONNECTION IS OUR STRENGTH

- Regional work around ReImagining Public Safety
- COVID-19 breaking barriers and bringing people together
- CA End the Epidemics Advocacy Coalition
- Be an ally!
THANK YOU

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