

Principles of Harm Reduction for Child Protection

Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug and alcohol use

Harm Reduction for Child Protection incorporates a spectrum of strategies from safer use, to managed use to abstinence to help parents address conditions of use along with the use itself with the aim of reducing the risk of harm to their children.

CPACS considers the following principles central to minimizing the risk of harm from drug and alcohol abuse to families:

- Accepts that drug use, both legal and illegal and alcohol abuse is part of our world and chooses to work to minimize its harmful effects on parents and children.
- Does not attempt to minimize or ignore the real and tragic harm and danger associated with drug and alcohol abuse.
- Understands drug use as a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon that encompasses a continuum of behaviors from severe abuse to total abstinence, and acknowledges that some ways of using drugs and alcohol are clearly safer than others.
- Establishes child safety and well-being –not necessarily cessation of all drug use—as the criteria for successful interventions and policies.
- Calls for the non-judgmental provision of services and resources within the community to people who use drugs in order to assist them in reducing attendant harm.
- Ensures that drug and alcohol abusers have a real voice in their treatment plan.
- Affirms drug and alcohol abusers themselves as the primary agents of reducing the harms of their drug use, and seeks to empower users to share information and support each other in strategies which meet their actual conditions of use.
- 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 while affirming that the safety of the child remains paramount.