



Harm Reduction.  
Housing.  
Hope.

Emma Roberts (she/her)  
Sarah Gorry (she/her)

**NATIONAL**  
**HARM REDUCTION**  
**COALITION**

National Harm Reduction Coalition creates spaces for **dialogue and action** that help heal the harms caused by racialized drug policies.



---

Policy &  
Advocacy



---

National & Regional  
Conferences



---

Trainings &  
Technical  
Assistance



---

Overdose  
Prevention



---

Resources &  
Publications

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Housing Overview**

What is Housing First?

## **Harm Reduction Overview**

Approach, principles & services

## **Informal Partnerships**

Ways HF & HR programs can partner together

## **Formal Partnerships**

Strategies for forming more formal partnerships

## **Closing**

Resources

Q & A

Survey



# HOUSING OVERVIEW

# THE HOUSING FIRST APPROACH

Housing First is a proven approach in which people experiencing homelessness are connected to permanent housing swiftly and with few to no treatment preconditions, behavioral contingencies, or other barriers

# CORE ELEMENTS OF HOUSING FIRST

- Access to programs is **not contingent on sobriety**, minimum income requirements, lack of a criminal record, completion of treatment, participation in services, or other unnecessary conditions.
- Programs or projects do everything possible not to reject an individual or family based on poor credit or financial history, poor or lack of rental history, minor criminal convictions, or behaviors that are interpreted as indicating a lack of “housing readiness.”
- Housing and service goals and plans are highly **tenant-driven**.
- Supportive services emphasize **engagement** and problem-solving over therapeutic goals. Participation in services or compliance with service plans are not conditions of tenancy but are reviewed with tenants and regularly offered as a resource to tenants.

Source: [U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness](#)

# CORE ELEMENTS OF HOUSING FIRST

- Services are informed by a **harm reduction** philosophy that recognizes that drug and alcohol use and addiction are a part of some tenants' lives. Tenants are engaged in **non-judgmental** communication regarding drug and alcohol use and are offered education regarding how to avoid risky behaviors and engage in safer practices.
- Substance use in and of itself, without other lease violations, is not considered a reason for eviction.
- Tenants in supportive housing are given reasonable **flexibility** in paying their share of rent on time and offered special payment arrangements for rent arrears and/or assistance with financial management, including representative payee arrangements.
- Every effort is made to provide a tenant the opportunity to transfer from one housing situation, program, or project to another if a tenancy is in jeopardy. Whenever possible, **eviction back into homelessness is avoided.**

Source: [U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness](#)

# IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Find your local CoC contact: <https://resources.hud.gov/>  
Click **“Find Homeless Resources Near Me”**
  - Keep in mind faith-based organizations, coalitions & soup kitchens
  - In rural communities the CoC may not be in your own county
- Limitations to Housing First
  - Not every housing program adopts the model
  - Fidelity to the model can vary widely
  - Some people fundamental disagree with the approach
  - Various factors impact referrals and housing placements including a lack of affordable housing

**Housing First is an evidence-based approach**

# HOUSING FIRST WITH HARM REDUCTION

“While the majority of the HFwithHR articles explicitly identified harm reduction as part of Housing First, language discussing harm reduction as compatible with, **rather than critical to**, Housing First could be taken to mean harm reduction is an optional component of the intervention.”



# HARM REDUCTION OVERVIEW

# THE HARM REDUCTION **APPROACH**

Harm reduction is an evidenced-based practical public health approach that reduces the negative consequences of drug use and sex work and promotes the health of people and communities

**SAFER  
TECHNIQUES**

**MANAGED USE**

**ABSTINENCE**

# HARM REDUCTION PRINCIPLES

Health and  
Dignity

Participant  
Centered  
Services

Participant  
Involvement

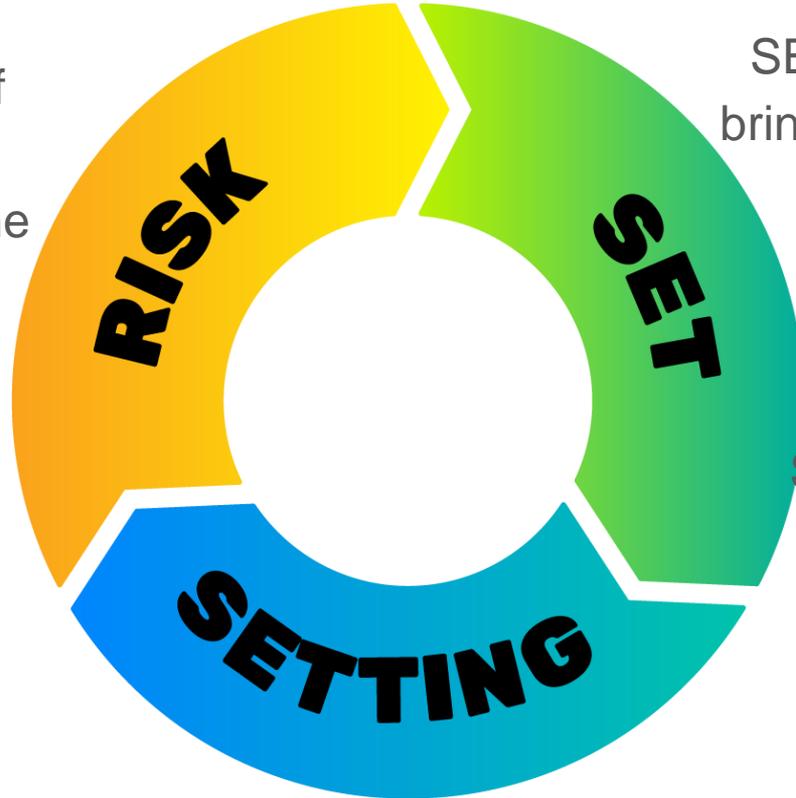
Participant  
Autonomy

Sociocultural  
Factors

Pragmatism  
and Realism

# RISK, SET, SETTING MODEL

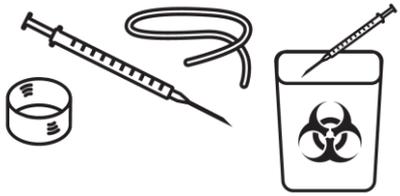
RISK - The risk itself you're discussing (directly related to the use of drugs or doing sex work)



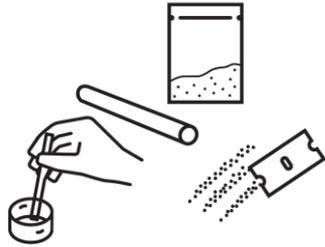
SET - The “mindset” someone brings to the situation, including thoughts, mood, and expectations

SETTING - The physical and social environment where the person is, and their perception of how that can promote or reduce risk

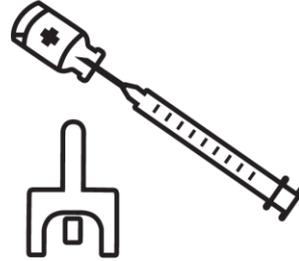
# HARM REDUCTION SERVICES



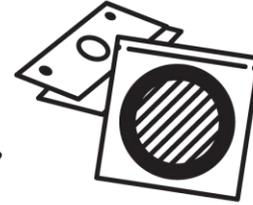
Syringe Access and Disposal



Safer Drug Use Supplies



Overdose Prevention



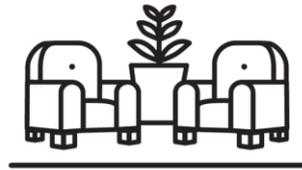
Safer Sex Materials



Medication for Opioid Use Disorder



Safer Consumption Services



Drop-in Centers



Housing First



Referrals



NOT ALL PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS ARE  
LIVING UNHOUSED

NOT ALL PEOPLE WHO ARE LIVING  
UNHOUSED USE DRUGS



WHAT ARE SOME REASONS THEY MAY  
**OVERLAP?**

# DRUG USE AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

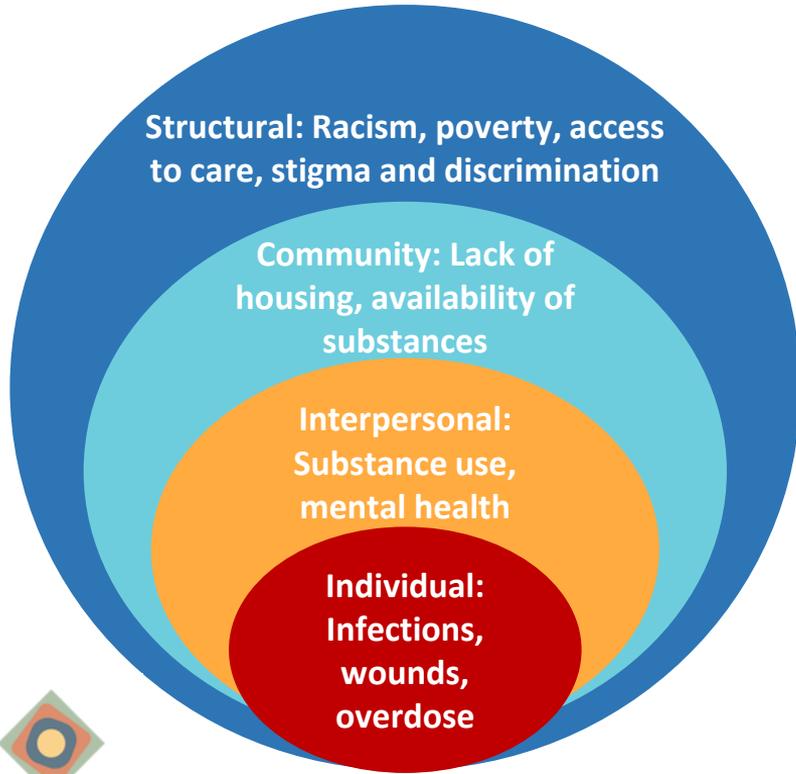
**Setting of drug  
use**

**Substances are  
often used to  
endure, cope,  
and survive**

**Continued loss  
of belongings**

**Hierarchy of  
Needs**

# SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH FOR PWUD



- **Social determinants of health** are social, economic, and political circumstances that influence individual and community health status.
- Comprehensive harm reduction addresses drug use as well as the environment in which someone is using drugs.
- Experiences of discrimination and trauma related to race and gender identity, class, family history, and incarceration influence people's drug use behaviors and access to care.
- Within a harm reduction framework, **providers' responsibility is to acknowledge and address barriers in order to promote stability, safety, and health for their communities.**



# INFORMAL PARTNERSHIPS

# INFORMAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Being a soft hand off to each other
  - Create an environment where it's safe to disclose housing/drug use status
  - You are a trusted person
  - Be a trustworthy partner
- Sharing of information
  - Respect a person's right to privacy
  - Informal sharing of information when the person is present with permission throughout
  - Formal release of information
- Housing takes time
  - Stay connected and share updates
  - Allow space for the frustrations
- Knowing people's places
  - With their permission, know how to find them when things happen

# INFORMAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Housing Providers
  - Spread the word about Narcan
  - Tour your local SSP
  - Practice harm reduction
- Harm Reduction Providers
  - Practical safety planning
  - Hygiene products, mirror, socks, coffee, snacks, time in bathroom
  - Providing space to regroup
- Join each other's coalitions



# MORE FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS

# FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS

## Hope Gardens and Evergreen Health

- Harm reduction counseling in a single-site permanent supportive housing (PSH) program

## Evergreen Health and Outreach Team

- Weekly scheduled outreach at the local SSP
- Has outlasted staff turnover

# SYSTEMATIZED PARTNERSHIPS

NYC's Jericho Housing Opioid Overdose Prevention Program (OOPP)

- Housing staff can train people in how to use narcan
- Allows housing staff to distribute narcan

Process for becoming an OOPP varies by state

- In NYS Department of Health website includes instructions and registration form



WHO ARE THE PROVIDERS IN YOUR  
COMMUNITY YOU MAY WANT TO  
**PARTNER WITH?**

# RESOURCES

National Harm Reduction Coalition

<https://harmreduction.org/resource-center/>

Corporation for Supportive Housing

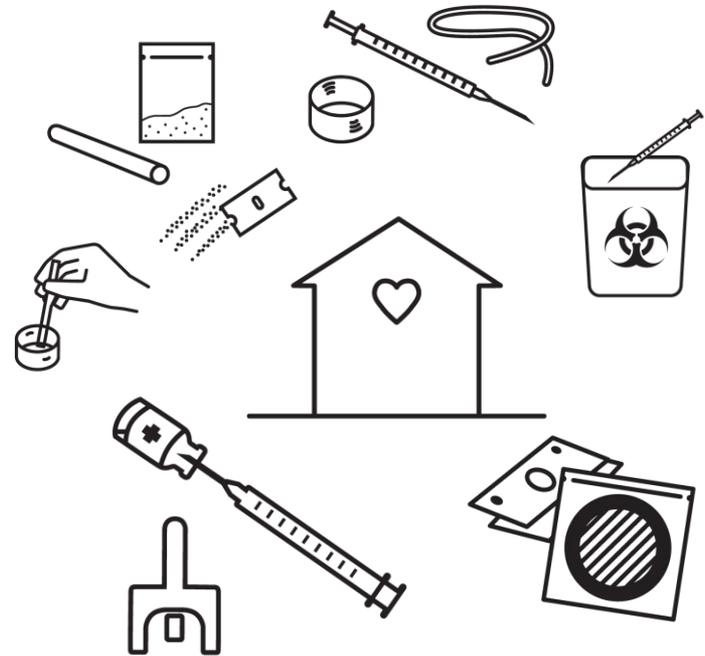
<https://www.csh.org/resources/>

RIZE Massachusetts

<https://www.rizema.org/yourrights/>

Pathways to Housing

<https://www.pathwayshousingfirst.org/>



**NATIONAL  
HARM REDUCTION  
COALITION**