

Applying Harm Reduction Principles to Critical Time Intervention

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What is harm reduction?

Poll questions

Harm reduction applied in CTI

Stages of change model

Readiness to change

Harm reduction practice

Case vignette (#1) as an example

Case vignette (#2) as a group



What is Harm Reduction?

Your definition





Traditional definition:

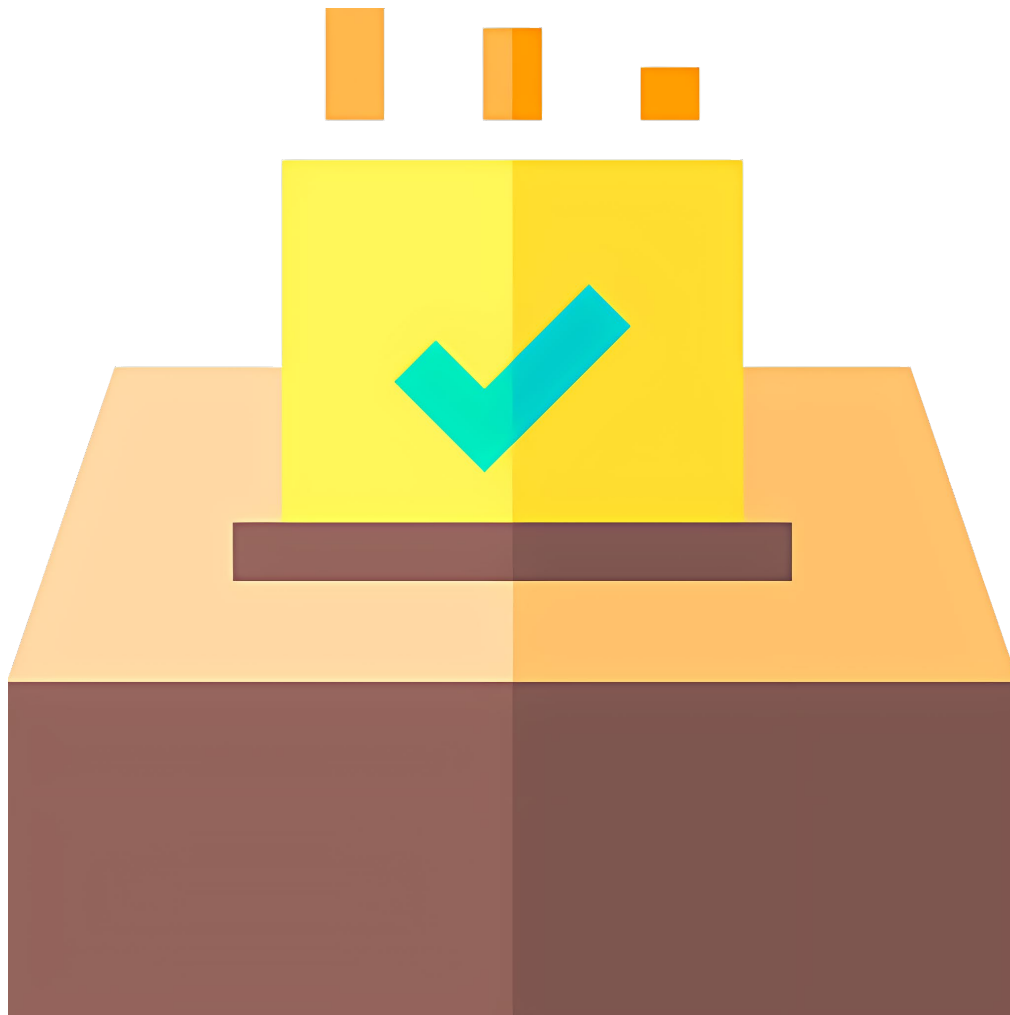
“Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use”

-National Harm Reduction Coalition



Examples of harm reduction services:

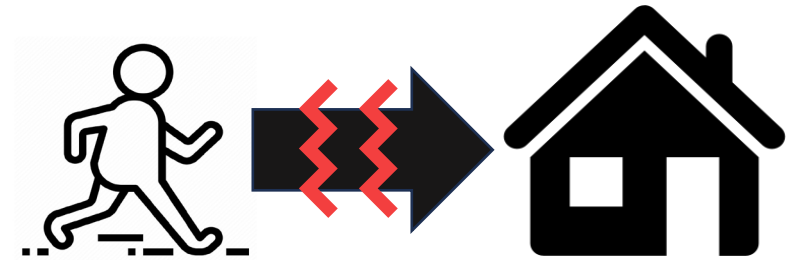
Needle exchange
Safe Injection sites
HIV prevention
Medication for Addiction Treatment
Naloxone
Fentanyl test strips



- How often do you utilize harm reduction in your work with Veterans?
- Have you utilized harm reduction with Veterans going through transitions (e.g., housing, employment, legal, recovery, etc.)?

Harm Reduction Applied in CTI

- According to CTI, harm reduction is a plan to reduce harm associated with *any* risky behavior or threat to Veteran's housing stability
- CTI expands on the traditional definition
- Harm reduction can be used in any phase of CTI
- **Goal:** Support Veteran housing retention and address risky behaviors at each phase of CTI



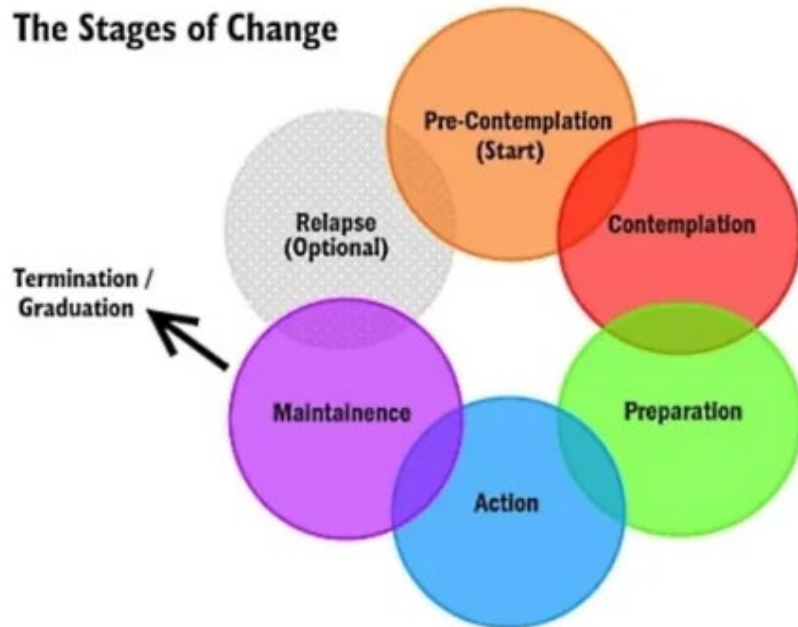
Examples of Risky Behavior



- What are some risky behaviors you have seen with the Veterans you work with?
- Here are some examples:
 - Financial irresponsibility/spending habits
 - Having friends over when it is a lease violation
 - Smoking indoors
 - Ignoring health screenings and preventative care
 - Poor stress management
 - Neglecting sleep and rest
 - Violating legal agreements/requirements
 - Illicit drug use
 - Poor diet and lack of physical activity

Stages of Change

The Stages of Change



Pre-Contemplation

“It isn’t that we cannot see the solution. It’s that we cannot see the problem.”



Contemplation

“ I want to stop feeling stuck.”
“You know your destination, and even how to get there, but you are not ready to go.”



Preparation

Planning to take action



Action

Modify behavior and environment



Maintenance

Continued effort to maintain the changes

Readiness to Change



Identify a risky behavior



Assess for readiness and willingness to change



Acknowledge that everyone can have different levels of readiness to change



Meet the Veterans where they are at



Align harm reduction to Veteran's stage of change and continuously assess





Change doesn't end with action

Without strong commitment to maintenance, relapse can happen to contemplation or pre-contemplation stage



Helpful discussion topics with Veterans

- Identify motivation for change
- Intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation
- Beliefs about self-efficacy
- Addressing challenges to change
- Developing action plans and strategies

CTI Harm Reduction Practice: Case Vignette 1



Terrance is a 48-year-old, single Navy Veteran at risk of homelessness for the third time. He has a diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder. He slept in his car for 5 months before reconnecting with housing through your program. Terrance reports finding full-time employment is his top priority, and he is **interested in jobs in the security field**. He expresses a **strong desire to get a referral** for a more permanent position and plans to connect with VA vocational rehabilitation for this purpose, but he is **concerned about his current employment status**.

- Currently, he has a **temporary job** with a construction company, but he is not in good standing **due to missed workdays** caused by his recent behavior.
- Terrance has **not been taking his psychiatric** medications and missing his mental health appointments. He is also **sleeping less than 5 hours** a day and doesn't see this to be a problem.
- He admits that he often chooses not to take his medications because they make him too sleepy during the day. As a result, his **productivity has declined at work**, he is forgetful and irritable.
- He also has a hard time managing his finances as can't recall due dates for payments
- Despite your encouragement to maintain his medication routine to stabilize his sleep and daily functioning, he is resistant

CTI Harm Reduction Practice: Case Vignette 1



Identify risky behaviors



Assess for readiness to change



Keep an open dialogue with the Veteran and adjust as needed



Have realistic goals



Engage the Veteran in the process of completing the CTI harm reduction form



Revisit the form at the end of each phase

CTI Harm Reduction Practice: Case Vignette 1



Complete the CTI Harm Reduction Form:

Harm Reduction Plan for Housing Stabilization



Housing Risk	Options	Factors in Favor	Factors Against	Non-Negotiable

Factors in favor of change / reducing harm (supporting factors):

Motivation to work

Willingness to find time and meet with the case manager

Reasons for not reducing harm:

Nonnegotiable items:

Sample Harm Reduction Form



Harm Reduction Plan for Housing Stabilization



Housing Risk	Options	Factors in Favor	Factors Against	Non-Negotiable
Poor Sleep Patterns contributing to poor attendance at work.	Follow up with medical and mental health providers to address poor sleep Continue the same behavior Smoke marijuana to help with sleep	Have the phone number to my primary care physician	Don't have a ride to the VA	Losing my job

Jackie, a 32-year-old female Army Veteran, has **experienced being unhoused** for 6 years and is now residing in independent housing. She has a diagnosis of **schizophrenia** and **HIV**.

- She reports her boyfriend of 5 years has been **asking her for money** over the past year and has **threatened her if she refuses**
- She continues to give him money monthly but is **concerned that she will not have enough** to pay her rent in the future, as his demands have been increasing
- She **expresses a desire to maintain her independence** and keep her housing secure, but she also **wants to preserve her relationship**.
- **She is tearful and afraid**



- Review case vignette #2 in your group and complete the CTI Harm Reduction Form
- You have 15 minutes before you come back and share your discussion points

- ❑ Meet the Veteran where he/she is at
- ❑ Assess at each phase of CTI
- ❑ Assess for readiness and willingness
- ❑ Discuss the stages of change model with the Veteran
- ❑ Highlight strengths for the Veteran to maintain housing
- ❑ Discuss challenges associated with risky behaviors

Upcoming CTI Events



Save the date for our
next CTI Booster
Session- Tuesday,
September 2, 2025



Upcoming CTI training
– July 8, 15, 22, 2025

THANK YOU!

