

Talking Points

The language we use matters. As partners in harm reduction, we play a powerful role in shifting harmful narratives about people who use drugs. Challenging stigmas around drug use is an important component of our work. Please use these talking points to help guide conversations within your organization and your community.

About the need

- We believe everyone in Oregon deserves to have their health and dignity supported.
- Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Oregon was already in an overdose crisis. Today, the situation is much worse.
- Disruption in treatment and recovery services, coupled with social isolation, job loss and community trauma have left many struggling.
- We know we must do more to support people in preventing overdose and reducing the risk of infection.
- People who use drugs need support and can reduce their risk of death and other harmful effects related to drug use, such as HIV and hepatitis C.
- Every life is worth saving — and there's no wrong way to seek hope, healing and health.

About harm reduction

- For people who use drugs, supporting them in preventing overdoses and adopting safer use practices is a proven step toward hope, healing and health.
- Harm reduction recognizes and supports an individual's agency to reduce the risks associated with drug use and makes our communities safer.
- Harm reduction supports the agency of people who use drugs by making safer use supplies easily accessible — like medication to reverse an overdose and new syringes — and providing connections to social services, medical care, treatment and more.
- Harm reduction is proven to save lives. For example, syringe service programs are proven to reduce HIV and hepatitis C infection rates by about 50 percent.
- Harm reduction works. That's why support for these evidence-based strategies continues to grow as more communities embrace harm reduction as a critical step along the continuum of care.
- We need every road to health to remain open and available to people who use drugs — from prevention and treatment to recovery support and harm reduction.

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Reach out:
info@savelivesoregon.org

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About Save Lives Oregon

- Save Lives Oregon is a movement of organizations that recognize harm reduction as a vital part of a comprehensive, compassionate and justice-based public health approach to drug use.
- Save Lives Oregon began in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the overdose crisis and left many families, neighborhoods and communities struggling.
- Save Lives Oregon supports organizations looking to integrate harm reduction strategies into their services by connecting them with supplies and technical assistance. Life-saving supplies such as naloxone are available at no cost, along with training, guidance and resources to organizations that directly serve people who use drugs.
- People are less likely to seek health care if they feel unwelcome or judged. Save Lives Oregon is supporting organizations working to build trust and by meeting people who use drugs on their own terms with the respect and dignity they deserve. When there is trust and respect, people who use drugs will be able to better engage with services and systems.

About the "Save Lives Oregon Clearinghouse"

- The Save Lives Oregon Clearinghouse provides supplies such as life-saving naloxone and wound care kits to organizations that qualify, at no cost.
- The supplies available through the Clearinghouse were identified by partner organizations as supplies that people who use drugs request and that are needed to help people stay safe.
- The community is safer when we work to reduce the risks of infection and overdose. In addition to naloxone and safer use supplies, the Clearinghouse provides wound care supplies, masks and personal sharps boxes. Everyone can benefit from more tools and support that lead to safer and healthier communities.
- As of July 2022, 175 organizations have joined Save Lives Oregon.

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