

LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE:

HOW TO IMPLEMENT HARM REDUCTION IN THE COLLEGIATE SETTING

AUTHORS

Nina C. Christie, MPH, PhD^{1,2,3,4}

Jason Ortiz⁴

Rob Hoffman⁴

Kristin Nash, MPH⁵

AFFILIATIONS

1. University of Southern California, Department of Psychology
2. University of Southern California, Department of Population and Public Health Sciences
3. University of Southern California, Institute for Addiction Science
4. Students for Sensible Drug Policy
5. William G. Nash Foundation, 501(c)(3)

INTRODUCTION

- Harm-reduction has traditionally focused on those at high risk for drug-related harms, like folks who inject drugs, or people who belong to marginalized group(s)
- College students use more substances than non-college attending peers, and while they are over-represented in research - they have yet to be widely included in the benefits of harm reduction approaches
- Harm reduction has the potential to positively impact college students across the United States
- Some universities cite violating the DFSCA as a reason for not having harm reduction programs on campus

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the main harm reduction programs that can (or could) benefit campus populations?
2. What role does the Drug Free Schools & Communities Act (DFSCA) play in campus drug policy?

METHOD

- We used a mixed-methods approach, combining a scoping review of current harm reduction programs at institutes of higher education with a policy analysis of the DFSCA.
- Our scoping review evaluated 10 (non-exhaustive) harm reduction programs in the collegiate setting
- Our policy analysis evaluated how universities make decisions about what substance use programs and policies to implement

WIDELY AVAILABLE



Safe Ride Programs decrease rates of impaired driving, accidents, and DUI arrests all without increasing the high-risk alcohol consumption. These programs are highly cost-effective.



Amnesty Programs increase the chances that a student will seek help in the case of an emergency, and decrease the number of adverse events students experience.



Harm Reduction Education is effective. **Over 90%** of students say that these programs influence their approach to substance use. Education on protective behavioral strategies is associated with fewer negative outcomes from substance use.



Brief Interventions in college students reduce how much alcohol students drink, and negative consequences from substance use. Some programs also show **long term (4+ years) effects**.

INCREASINGLY AVAILABLE



Sober Living Programs have been around for almost a decade at various universities. Students say things like **"It has made college possible for me"**. They provide a sense of community and a chance for students to increase recovery capital.



Naloxone Training & Distribution increases awareness of signs of an opioid overdose, reduces stigma about those who use opioids, and **decrease the risk of overdose** in populations that are highly trained and carry naloxone.



Peer-to-Peer Programs are one of the core tenets of harm reduction in college settings. They can reduce the inequities in access to mental health care. They are **effective in mitigating other health-related harms**, but have not been widely implemented for substance use.



Drug Disposal programs can reduce the risk of using excess medications, and the environmental harms from flushing drugs. At one university, **10% of substances turned in were controlled substances** - most commonly opioids.

UNAVAILABLE



Overdose Prevention Centers do not currently exist on any college campuses. They **have been effective for over 3 decades across the globe** in reducing overdose rates, decreasing disease transmission, and increasing access to care.



Safe Supply is not yet available in either the collegiate or the broader community in the United States. There is **strong evidence that these programs would reduce fatal overdoses** in the United States. Less is known about if or how they would impact collegiate settings.

CONCLUSION & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Some harm reduction programs are widely available across many universities in the United States. However, there are other programs and policies that have been less widely adopted. The DFSCA states that schools must have (among other things) *a policy for illicit substances; it does not specify what those policies must be*. We aim to publish a handbook for institutes of higher education that explains both the law, and outlines what harm reduction programs and policies can be enacted - without violating the DFSCA. This will give student leaders, and allies in the administration, the information they need to advocate for a safer and healthier campus environment. Implementing harm reduction programs in the college population should be a priority among administrators as students continue to experience negative consequences of substance use - due in large part to an increasingly unpredictable drug supply. These programs reduce fatalities, increase awareness of safer substance use strategies, reduce high-risk behaviors, and increase access to treatment for substance use disorders and/or other mental health problems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- We would like to thank the communities of activists, loved ones, people with lived experience, and advocates who have fought to create harm reduction for those who were systematically denied care.
- We would like to thank the generosity of the William G. Nash Foundation for funding the project.
- We would like to thank the universities who have piloted these programs and documented the results so that others can benefit from your experience.



Let's Connect:
email:
ncchrist@usc.edu



WILLIAM G. NASH FOUNDATION

ssdp Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Start making sense™