

Library Services for Patrons Who Use Drugs

Why should we offer services to our patrons who use drugs?

First and foremost, patrons who use drugs are patrons--members of our communities whom we are committed to serving.

Further, as providers of information, all services we offer are opportunities to tell people about ways they can get help and stay safe. The information we provide is literally life saving.

In the case of offering Fentanyl Test Strips, surely there is no more vital piece of information that libraries can provide than whether the substance our patron is about to ingest is a deadly poison or not.

What is Harm Reduction?

"Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs."

-National Harm Reduction Coalition

"Harm reduction programs connect people who use drugs to supplies (e.g., new syringes, fentanyl test strips, and naloxone) that help prevent overdose deaths and the spread of infections. They also connect people to healthcare, medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD), HIV and Hepatitis C testing, and a community space free from judgment and stigma."

-New Jersey Harm Reduction Coalition

Won't these services encourage them to use more drugs?

Not only have harm reduction services been shown to not increase drug use, they can result in increases in the seeking of treatment and other supportive services by their participants.

People who utilize syringe access programs, for example, are:

- Five times more likely to enter drug treatment.
- More likely to reduce the frequency of their drug use.
- Five times more likely to stop use of the substance that causes them problems.
- Three times more likely to stop substance use altogether.

These services give people agency, empower them to make safer choices, and provide them with the information and tools to survive and better their situations.

"When someone needs help, the library is one of the few places where they feel comfortable. Going to a treatment center may be a much scarier step."

-Barbara Gay, Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center

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Naloxone Distribution/Training

NJHRC mails naloxone (brand name Narcan) for free and confidentially to anyone at risk to witness or experience an overdose, throughout NJ. They provide intramuscular (IM) naloxone for general distribution as well. One can request naloxone by calling or texting 1-877-4NARCAN or by going to nextdistro.org/newjersey. They also provide training for use.

The NJ Department of Human Services supplies naloxone nasal spray for free as part of the new Overdose Prevention Act. Libraries can sign up at dmhas.dhs.state.nj.us/NDP.

Libraries can have naloxone available for staff to administer in the event of an overdose, or can freely provide it to patrons.

Syringes are decriminalized in NJ, and there is a standing order allowing anyone to carry and use all FDA-approved forms of naloxone, including IM naloxone, which is the fastest acting in a fentanyl overdose, due to a higher bioavailability when administered into muscle tissue. Further, the large syringe used for delivery of IM naloxone is similar to a syringe used to administer hormone treatment and vaccinations, and thus useless for drug use.

If distributing naloxone, consider attaching magnets and/or clips so they can be placed somewhere easy to see and access.

Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS)

The appearance of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues in the illicit drug supply has resulted in a massive increase in overdose deaths in the U.S. They are extremely potent, undetectable to any of our senses, and now taint significant percentages of every drug supply in varying quantities.

FTS are a forensic tool repurposed by people who use drugs (PWUD) to test a substance before using it, specifically to be aware if fentanyl may be present. FTS can be acquired from the New Jersey Harm Reduction Coalition for free, and are prioritized for distribution directly to people who use drugs. They can be offered by libraries for people to take home and test their supplies. FTS do not contain drugs.

Research shows that FTS help people to be better informed, which can lead to behavior changes and adoption of harm reduction measures. Further, PWUD from one study appreciated FTS so much, they began sharing their allotted supply with others.

While they are not foolproof, they are the best option available right now for PWUD to have a sense of whether or not their drugs may contain fentanyl, and to make an informed choice to prevent a fatal overdose. In short, they're free, people like them, and they work.

Other Ways to Help

- Overdose Prevention Training (for staff and patrons)
- HIV Testing: Organizations like Planned Parenthood and Iris House provide free HIV testing, potentially right within the library.
- Provide Sharps Disposal Bins
- Install Defibrillators
- Offer Condoms, Pregnancy Tests, Soap/Alcohol Wipes, and Drug Deactivation Bags (like Detera)
- Posting Info for Never Use Alone Hotline 1-800-997-2280 and [the Brave App](#).
- Bathroom Door Modification: Trim off a few inches of the door's bottom edge to see if people are passed out on the floor.
- Anonymous Suggestion Box: Listen to your community to learn how you can help.
- Safe Use Kits: Can be obtained at a Harm Reduction Center
- Be Aware of Fentanyl Overdose Alerts

Statewide Resources

- **NJ'S 24/7 Addiction Helpline** Treatment and support services are available even if the person needing help does not have insurance. 1-844-REACHNJ (1-844-732-2465)
- **Community Peer Recovery Centers (CPRC)** provide peer support recovery services and/or activities to the community. Services include: naloxone training and kits, peer recovery coaching, social and/or recreational activities, support groups, and much more. <https://nj.gov/humanservices/reachnj/help/centers/index.shtml>
- **The NJ Family Support Center (FSC) Program** provides support services to family members of individuals with a substance use disorder. Examples of the services available to families include: information about naloxone training, educating family members on navigating the treatment system and detecting unethical practices, and direct one-on-one and group support. <https://nj.gov/humanservices/reachnj/help/centers/index.shtml>
- The Mental Health Association in New Jersey's **NJMentalHealthCares Helpline** offers free, anonymous online mental health screenings in cooperation with Mental Health America. Self-assessments are available for depression, anxiety, substance abuse, PTSD and bipolar disorder, as well as screens for youth and parents. The Help Line staff offers telephone counseling, info and referral and assistance in helping to get the behavioral health services needed by you or a loved one. 1-866-202-HELP (4357) (TTY 1-877-294-4356)

Harm Reduction Centers in New Jersey

Harm Reduction Centers (HRCs), also known as Syringe Access Programs, are community-based programs that provide a safe, trauma-informed, non-stigmatizing space for people who use drugs to access sterile syringes, injection equipment, safer use tools, FTS, and the life-saving drug naloxone (also known as Narcan), along with education on safer use, overdose prevention, safe disposal of used equipment, and connections to resources for housing, mental health care, and medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) or other treatment for substance use disorder (SUD) when requested.

- Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey, Prevention Resource Network, Asbury Park
- South Jersey AIDS Alliance, Atlantic City
- Camden Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Camden (Mobile Site)
- Hyacinth AIDS Foundation, Jersey City
- North Jersey Community Research Initiative (NJCRI), Newark
- Hyacinth AIDS Foundation, Paterson (Mobile Site)
- Hyacinth AIDS Foundation, Trenton

Sources

- <https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/syringe-services-programs-faq.html>
- <https://www.aclu.org/fact-sheet/needle-exchange-programs-promote-public-safety>
- <https://harmreduction.org/issues/fentanyl/fentanyl-test-strip-pilot/>
- <https://www.nj.gov/health/hivstdtb/sap.shtml>

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