Harm Reduction Best Practices

Arielle Gross, MPH, PPS

Overdose Data to Action Program Coordinator
Portland Public Health

Harm Reduction

A social justice movement which recognizes a belief in and respect for people who use drugs, focused on shifting power and resources to people most vulnerable to structural violence.

In practice, harm reduction is a set of principles.

- ❏ Acknowledges that drug use does happen, and attempts to minimize risk
- ❏ Promotes non-judgemental, non-coercive care
- ❏ Includes direct input from those with lived experience
- ❏ Provides agency in decision making

Source: National Harm Reduction Coalition

Rationale for Harm Reduction Services

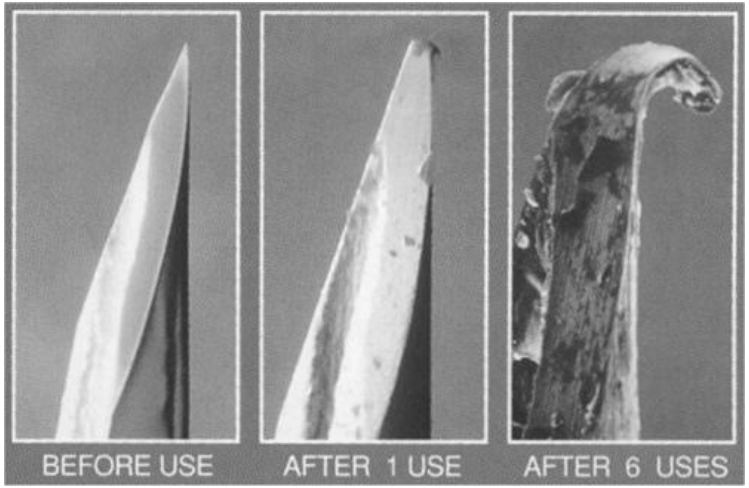
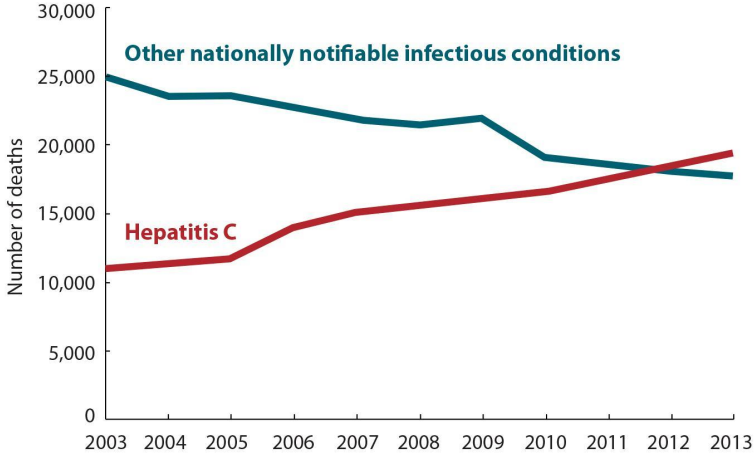


Image source: Diabetes Daily

Annual number of hepatitis C-related deaths vs. other nationally notifiable infectious conditions in the US, 2003-2013



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Harm Reduction Services at Portland Public Health

- ❏ Syringe Service Program
- ❏ HIV/HCV Testing
- ❏ Treatment and Other Service Referrals through Patient Navigators
- ❏ Basic Needs
- ❏ Naloxone Distribution
- ❏ Overdose Prevention, Recognition, and Response Trainings
- ❏ Sharps Disposal
- ❏ Immunizations for Hepatitis A or B
- ❏ Wound Care

The Exchange

SSP services

39 Forest Ave Portland, ME 04101
Mon, Weds, Thurs 9am-4pm
Tues 9 am-1 pm
Fri 10 am-4 pm

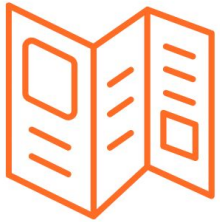
Street/Shelter outreach:
Wed 1-3pm- HSC
Fri 1-3pm- Bayside

Pharmacy Role in Harm Reduction

Overdose Prevention

Low-Barrier Supplies

Medication Access



Community Resources

Pharmacy Role in Harm Reduction

Individual

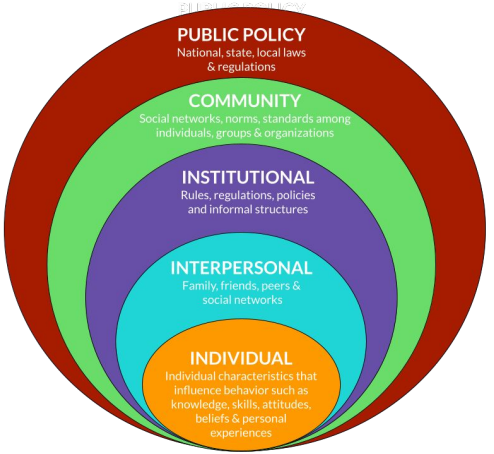
- ❑ Treat patients with dignity and compassion
- ❑ Protect patients' rights
- ❑ Maintain transparency in decision-making

Health Services

- ❑ Counsel on risks and safety strategies
- ❑ Utilize screening tools
- ❑ Educate patients about resources available to them
- ❑ Dispense medications which expand overdose prevention, harm reduction, and treatment options
- ❑ Develop protocols for effective referral processes

Social and Structural Determinants of Health

- ❑ Identify major barriers that keep individuals from getting the resources they need
- ❑ Create sustainable practices that enable equitable access



Source: Hughes et al., 2024

State-Certified Syringe Service Programs

Androscoggin County

Spurwink Community Recovery Harm Reduction Services | 1155 Lisbon Street Lewiston, ME 04240 | 207-344-1934
Church of Safe Injection | 195 Main Street Lewiston, ME 04240 | 207-241-2537

Cumberland County

"The Exchange" Portland Public Health | 39 Forest Avenue Suite 1 Portland, ME 04101 | 207-756-8022
Commonspace | 103 India Street Portland, ME 04101 | 207-773-1956
Church of Safe Injection | 800 Main Street Westbrook, ME 04092 | 207-241-2537

Franklin County

Franklin County Syringe Exchange | 105 Mt. Blue Circle Suite 1 Farmington, ME 04938
Franklin County Syringe Exchange | 78 North Main Street Strong, ME 04983

Kennebec County

MaineGeneral | 9 Green Street 2nd Floor Augusta, ME 04330 | 207-621-3768
MaineGeneral | Thayer Center for Health 149 North Street Terrace Level Room 0243 Waterville, ME 04901 | 207-861-5288

Oxford County

Maine Access Points | 218 Penobscot Street Rumford, ME 04276 | 207-319-8284
Church of Safe Injection | Rumford | 201-241-2537

State-Certified Syringe Service Programs

Penobscot County

Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness | 157 Part Street Suite 23 Bangor, ME 04401 | 207-299-6378
Needlepoint Sanctuary | Office at 120 Park Street Bangor, ME 04401 / Services at Camp Hope | 207-307-7588

Piscataquis County

Needlepoint Sanctuary | 38 E Main Street Mile, ME 04463 | 207-505-1510

Washington County

Maine Access Points | Waterfront Pier Calais, ME 04619 | 207-319-0094
Maine Access Points | 25 Main Street Unit #15 Machias, ME 04654 | 207-319-0094

York County

Maine Access Points | 840 Main Street Sanford, ME 04073 | 207-370-4782

Full list of state-certified syringe service programs:
https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/hiv-std/services/syringe-service-programs.shtml

Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach Naloxone and Safety (OPTIONS) Initiative

- Statewide program which offers connection to a spectrum of substance use services
- Liaisons placed in each county in Maine
- Aims:
  - Improve understanding of Good Samaritan Law
  - Increase distribution and availability of naloxone
  - Educate on safer use practices
  - Connect individuals with local prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, and other resources

OPTIONS

SAVE LIVES

KNOWYOUROPTIONS.ME

Maine Naloxone Distribution Initiative (MNDI)

Each catchment area is assigned a primary “Tier 1” naloxone distributor:

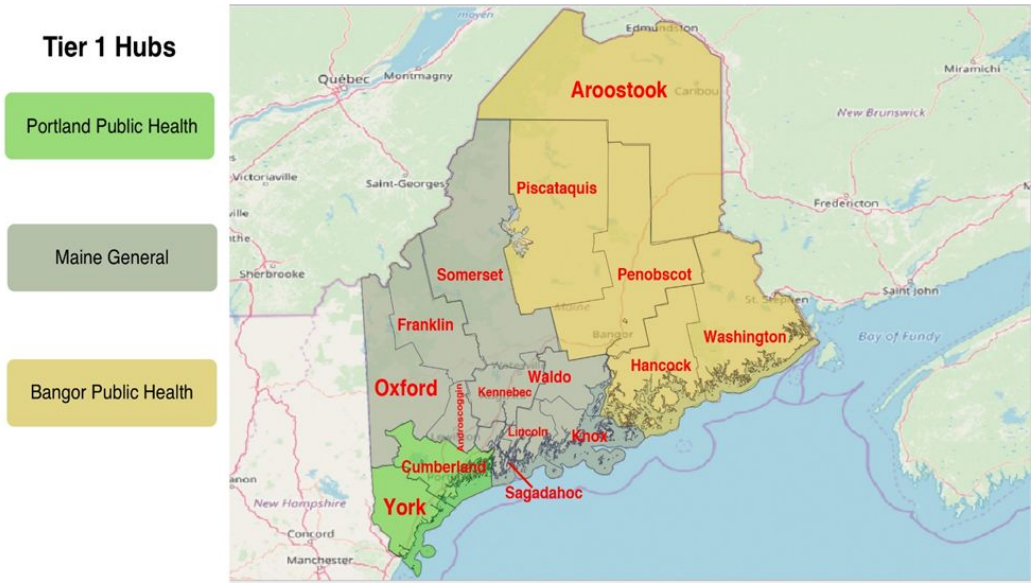
Bangor Public Health (BPH): Northern and Downeast Maine

MaineGeneral (MG): Central/Western/Midcoast Maine

Portland Public Health (PPH): Greater Portland Area/Southern Maine

A fourth Tier 1 provides statewide peer-to-peer naloxone distribution and training:

Maine Access Points (MAP): Statewide



Portland Public Health's Naloxone Distribution Profile

Serves Cumberland and York Counties

- ❏ Perhaps the most urban distribution profile due to its coverage of Southern Maine

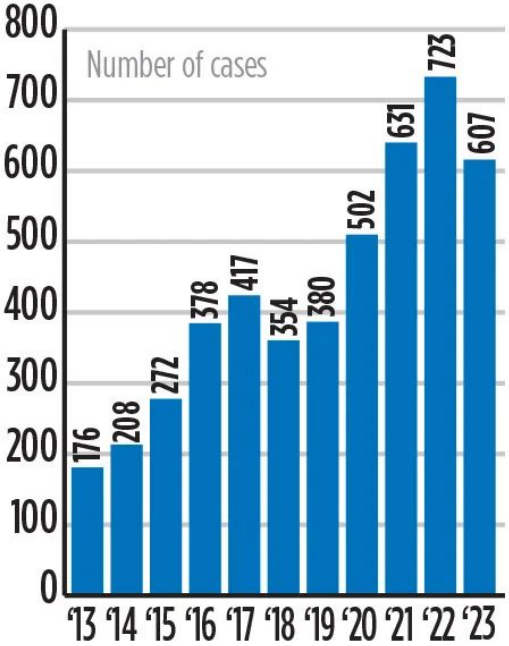
Currently have over 200 active Tier 2 organizations:

- ❏ Schools, libraries, businesses
- ❏ Syringe service programs
- ❏ Healthcare providers (ED, IMAT programs, Methadone clinics)
- ❏ Community organizations (Recovery centers, advocacy groups)
- ❏ County jails
- ❏ EMS providers
- ❏ Police substance use liaisons
- ❏ OPTIONS program liaisons

Types of Naloxone

Maine drug overdose deaths

Overdose deaths declined for the first time since 2018.



SOURCE: University of Maine and Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

STAFF GRAPHIC | DAVID TRIPP

Source: Portland Press Herald

City of portland

Questions & Answers

Contact:
Arielle Gross, MPH arielleg@portlandmaine.gov