

HARM REDUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT

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REFERENCES: OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS, HARM
REDUCTION AT WORK: A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYING PEOPLE
WHO USE DRUGS, DECEMBER 2010. WWW.SOROS.ORG/HARM-REDUCTION

HARM REDUCTION

Harm Reduction is a perspective and a set of practical strategies to reduce the negative consequences of drug use, incorporating a spectrum of strategies from safer use to abstinence.



A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES

Drug use exists along a continuum.

Abstinence is one of many possible goals. We meet people where they are at.

Drug-related harm cannot be assumed.

Drugs can meet important needs.



Drug users are more than their drug use.

HARM REDUCTION

Designs & promotes evidenced-based, public health interventions that minimize the harmful affects of drug use.



Understands drug use as a complex, multi-faceted issue that encompasses behaviors from severe abuse to total abstinence.

Focuses on behavior – especially when related to housing, employment, parenting, and other relationships.



HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction recognizes that the realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination and other social inequalities affect vulnerability to, and capacity for, effectively dealing with drug-related harm.

It does not attempt to minimize the real dangers associated with licit and illicit drug use, and how those issues impact lives.



LANGUAGE



Junkies, Dope Fiends

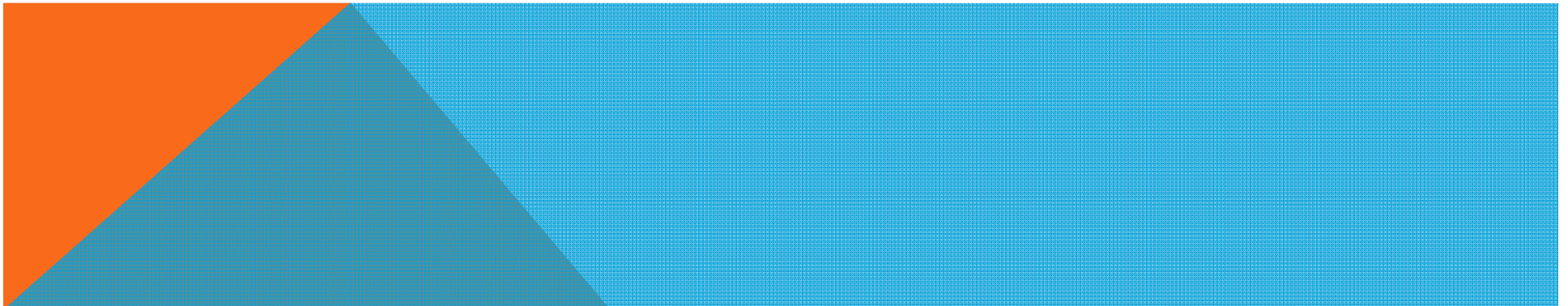
Crack-heads, Crack Babies

Drug Addicts, Drug Abusers, Drug Users

Drug Use, Drug Abuse, Drug Misuse

Clean and Dirty

Relapse vs. Lapse



HARM REDUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT

What is one of the first things we ask people when we meet them?

Are you working?

What do you do for work?

Where do you work?

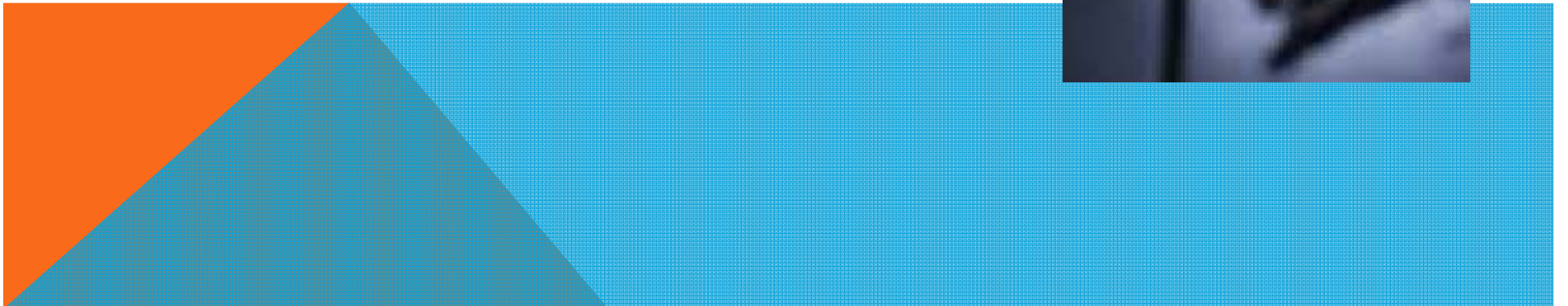
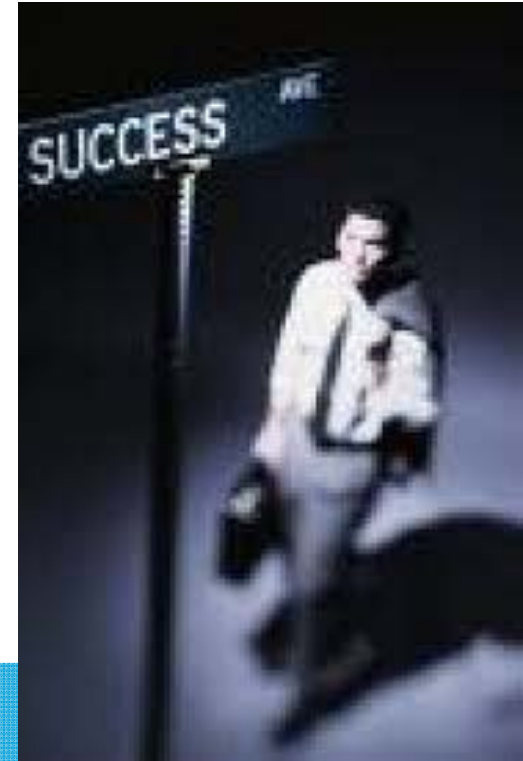


Being gainfully employed contributes to a person's self-esteem and self-worth.

HARM REDUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT

Working in a structured environment allows people to gain skills that may help them gain entry into other jobs.

People may come into entry jobs to learn basic skills such as following a schedule, participating in meetings, writing timely reports.



EMPLOYEES WHO ARE USING...

Face a number of hurdles whether currently using or undergoing treatment.

There may be moral, legal and procedural dilemmas.

They may have to make decisions without clear guidance.

Negative attitudes towards drug use can further compel people to conceal their use



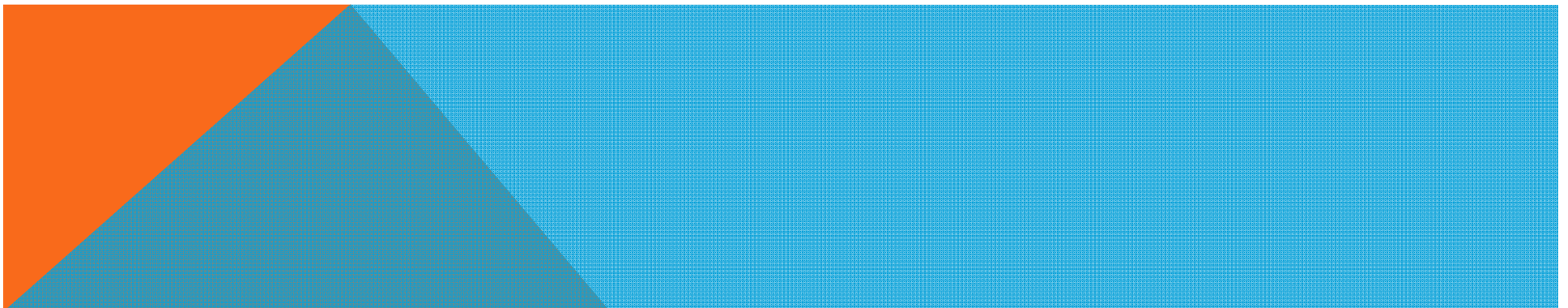
IMPORTANCE OF CLEAR POLICIES & PROCEDURES



It's important to understand that **everyone** is vulnerable.

Fear of repercussion can prevent users from seeking assistance and increase their sense of isolation.

They can apply to employees and clients/consumers.



SUPPORTING DRUG USERS LIVING WITH HIV AND HEPATITIS C

Both HIV and HCV are health risks that disproportionately affect drug users.

Along with overdose and violence, HIV and HCV are two of the worst possible consequences of the criminalization of certain drugs and restrictions on the paraphernalia required to consume those drugs.

Hiring people living with HIV or HCV sends a clear message to a harm reduction program's clients, other staff, and members of your community.



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WORK-RELATED PROBLEMS FOR EMPLOYEES WHO USE DRUGS (OR HAVE SUBSTANCE USE HISTORY) IN A HARM REDUCTION WORKPLACE



Workers interacting with drug users, have regular access to drugs.

Clients may feel indebted to service providers and may offer free drugs as tokens of their gratitude.

The work of drug users tends to be undervalued, these workers are seldom given priority and their initiatives are often neglected. This process is disempowering and isolates these workers from decision-making processes and, often, from other staff who do not use drugs.

HARM REDUCTION POLICIES FOR THE WORKPLACE

Organizations may choose to differentiate between policies for paid employees and policies for clients .

Clients, by definition, are members of the target community. Therefore it may not be practical to make clients adhere to certain policies that place professional boundaries between employees and clients.

Organizations should establish clear policies and standards for all employees, outreach workers, clients, and volunteers who represent the agency.



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INEBRIATION/BEING HIGH WHILE WORKING

Any policy must focus should be on the behavior. All staff are expected to perform their professional duties in a coherent, competent, and respectful manner.

This can include nodding or passing out, paranoia (in the case of amphetamines), slurred speech, threatening behaviors.



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DRUGS AND DRUG USE IN THE OFFICE

POLICY: Employees may not bring illegal/illicit drugs into the office or use drugs anywhere on the premises.



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BORROWING AND LENDING MONEY

Borrowing or Lending Money

POLICY: Employees may not borrow or lend money from/to one another.

This may be more important in service organizations that employ a harm reduction philosophy such as hiring active users or known former users.



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PURCHASING OR SELLING DRUGS



POLICY: Employees and may not purchase or sell drugs within these immediate vicinity of the organization.

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SUPPORTING DRUG/ALCOHOL USING EMPLOYEES WHO ARE PARENTS

Many child welfare agencies conflate drug use with child abuse and discriminate against parents who use drugs. Harm reduction organizations recognize that people who use drugs can be, and frequently are, excellent parents.

POLICY: The organization commits itself to supporting employees who are parents by, among other things, providing letters of support regarding job performance/reliability/ accountability and character references.



DRUG TREATMENT PROGRAMS AND WITHDRAWAL

The organization commits itself to policies that support employees who enroll in drug related programs (maintenance, tapering, or abstinence). The organization will take a supportive position toward employees enrolled in these programs (i.e. understanding issues with punctuality or absences from work).



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SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT



The confidentiality should always be respected. Private information about an employee's work performance review should never be shared with other staff, volunteers, or clients.

Supervision should be ongoing and consistent. Consistency is very useful in helping create positive work experiences.

Be flexible. Adjust your supervisory procedures to maximize positive returns for the program.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

Employees should be encouraged to be truthful about any problems or achievements they may encounter in their work, without fear of prejudice or discrimination.

Focus on job performance, not drug use. Discussions about an employee's drug use should never be used against an employee.

Positive reinforcement and problem-solving should be built into the format of supervision meetings.



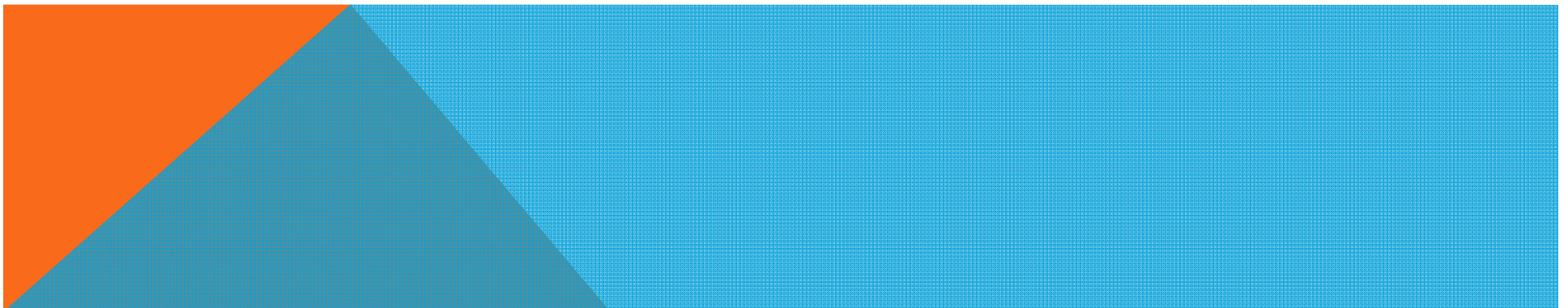
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DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS



Questions to ask:

1. Would this employee be criticized if he/she were not using drugs/alcohol?
2. Has the employee been sufficiently trained for his/her job and on the agency policies?
3. Have they received appropriate supervision/feedback?
4. Are the complaints/concerns related to any misperceptions of drugs and drug use?



CT HARM REDUCTION RESOURCES

Windham Harm Reduction Coalition Sterile Syringe Access, Advocacy/Activism, Drug Treatment. Referrals including HIV testing. Naloxone. Willimantic, CT <http://harmreduction.org/connect-locally/connecticut/whrc/>

AIDS CT Sterile Syringe Access, Support/Counseling, Drug Treatment (DT Advocacy), HIV Testing. Hartford, CT www.aids-ct.org

AIDS Project Greater Danbury

<http://aidsprojectgreaterdanbury.org/services/prevention-and-testing/syringe-exchange/>

City of Bridgeport

<http://www.bridgeportct.gov/HEALTHADMIN/Pages/HIVAIDSPrevention.aspx>

City of New Haven

<http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/Health/Aids.asp>

APT Foundation Support/Counseling, Drug Treatment, Methadone, Naloxone <http://aptfoundation.org/>

Recovery Network of Programs Bridgeport, CT <http://www.recovery-programs.org/>

**OPIATE
OVERDOSE
PREVENTION
AND SURVIVAL**

got naloxone?

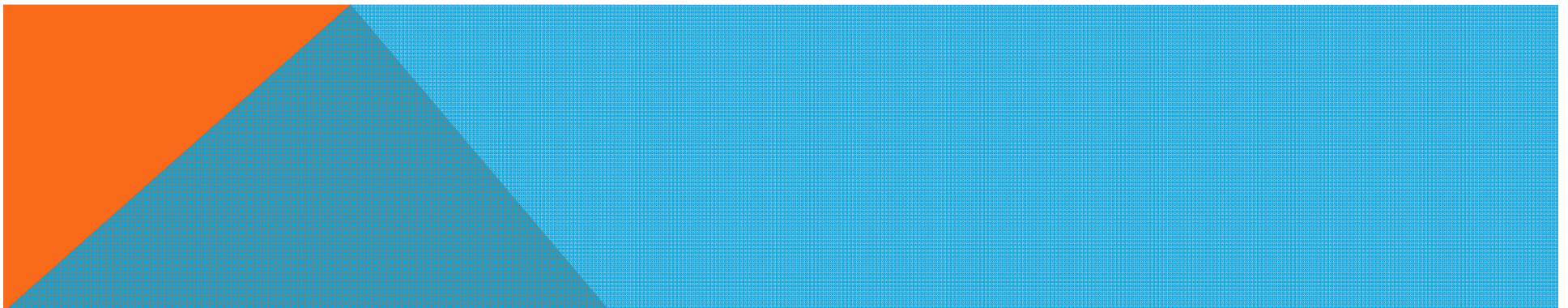


National Resources

National HRC <http://www.harmreduction.org>

National Syringe Exchange Network (NASEN)
<http://www.nasen.org/>

Drug Policy Alliance
www.drugpolicy.org



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