



# **ECHO IDAHO:** **Veteran Care for Substance Use Disorders**

**Veteran Harm Reduction**

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# Learning Objectives

- Basic overview of current behavioral health programs that already provide general harm reduction services.
- Overview of national Veteran's Affairs harm reduction program.
- Boise VA harm reduction program.
- Goals harm reduction program.
- Harm reduction case presentation.

# Current VA Programs That Practice Harm Reduction

- Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM), Health Care For Homeless Veterans, LGBT Program, Suicide Prevention, Outpatient Substance Use Disorder Program, Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program, Veterans Justice Outreach, Addiction Fellowship.
- Boise VA social workers carry naloxone rescue kits.

# VA Central Office

- VA Central Office provided funding for medical centers to hire harm reduction coordinators (HRC) FY23.
- Medical centers are hiring mostly Clinical Pharmacists and Licensed Clinical Social Workers.
- Although hiring is a mandate many medical centers are not hiring due to budget priorities; no clear number of HRC's have been hired.
- National priorities; hiring staff, SSP programs, low barrier MAT, sexual health/HIV prevention.

# Harm Reduction Program Mission Statement

- The Boise VAMC Harm Reduction Program (HRP) will use evidence-based practices and a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing the negative consequences associated with substance misuse. The harm reduction program will meet Veterans “where they are at” and will empower Veterans to advocate for their own stated goals/needs.
- HRP Goals.
  1. Reduce/eliminate drug overdose.
  2. Minimize the harmful effects of substance misuse.
  3. Raise awareness of harm reduction strategies.
  4. Increase access to medical treatment for Veterans that continue to use substances.
  5. Advocate for Veterans that continue to use substances.

# Boise VA Harm Reduction Program

## Overview

- Fentanyl/Xylazine testing strips.
- Contingency management.
- Access to recovery group.
- Proactively engaging Veterans that are at high risk.
- Facilitate opioid overdose review monthly meeting.
- Community outreach.
- Organized a call with 7 other VA social work harm reduction coordinators throughout the nation.
- VISN 20 HRCP calls.

# Boise VA Harm Reduction Program Goals

- Hire Advanced Practice Provider & Licensed Clinical Social Worker.
- Develop a multidisciplinary early intervention team.
- Convert Building 23 into the center of harm reduction.
- Increase awareness of sexual health for Veterans and providers.
- Educate all Boise VAMC on the principles of harm reduction.
- Harm reduction is everyone's business.

# Key Points

- The VA is a universal health care system. In general, the VA works to reduce harm for all Veterans.
- Boise VAMC behavioral health programs already provide a great deal of harm reduction services.
- The Boise VAMC harm reduction services program is in the early stages of development. Hopeful of the future.



# Questions

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# References

- VHA Directive 1160.04 (VHA PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS) [https://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub\\_ID=10070](https://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=10070)