

Training Session Plan

Introduction to Harm Reduction and Human Rights



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The International Federation of Health and Human Rights Organisations (IFHHRO)

IFHHRO forms a unique network of active organisations committed to the protection and promotion of health related human rights. Members and observers are human rights groups which address health-related rights violations, medical associations involved in human rights work, and organisations that have been created specifically to mobilize health workers for human rights protection.

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Learning Objectives

- To gain understanding of the relation between harm reduction and human rights.
- To become familiar with (human rights) issues that can arise with the implementation of harm reduction programs.



Target Group

A mixed group of individuals with little to no knowledge about harm reduction and human rights as well as individuals with some knowledge of harm reduction and/or human rights.



Duration

90 minutes



Training Aids

- PowerPoint presentation on harm reduction and human rights (available separately)
- Chapter 3 'Harm Reduction and Human Rights' of the *Health and Human Rights – A Resource Guide*, Open Society Institute and Equitas, 2009. Available online at: www.equalpartners.info
- Role plays on proposals for Harm Reduction programmes
- Connecting rights to violations
- Connecting rights to violations: answers



Session Plan

The session works best in combination with general introductory sessions about human rights in relation to health. To deepen the understanding of harm reduction as a human rights issue this session should be followed up with sessions that deal with, for instance, implementing harm reduction programmes using a rights based approach and sessions on the role of health workers in this regard. The introductory sessions and sessions related to the role of health workers can be found online in the IFHHRO Training Manual 'Human Rights for Health Workers' at www.ifhhro-training-manual.org.

Preparation

Study the PowerPoint presentation (Training Aid 1) and Chapter 3 of the Health and Human Rights Resource Guide (Training Aid 2). The information on the PowerPoint slides will need to be presented at the beginning of the session and the information from the Resource Guide can be used as background for this brief presentation. The content of the PowerPoint presentation is based on pages 3-2 and 3-3 of the Resource Guide and can be adjusted to fit specific needs.

Choose one of the two role plays (Training Aid 3) and make 5 copies.
Make copies of Training Aid 4, there should be one copy per two participants.
Copy the information in Training Aid 5 onto a PowerPoint Slide.

Step 1 Introduction & Objectives (5 minutes)

Inform participants of the topic and the main aim of the session.

Step 2 *Presentation (15 minutes)*

Using Training Aids 1 and 2 briefly introduce participants to the meaning of harm reduction and several examples of human rights advocacy for drug users.

Step 3 *Explanation of the Role Play (15 minutes)*

Explain the selected role play to the participants and request a volunteer for each role. Choose a participant with some knowledge about human rights for the role of legal advisor. Give the five players 10 minutes to prepare their role play together outside the room. While the participants are preparing their role play instruct the remaining participants to carefully observe the different agendas of the players in the role play and to try and think from a human rights perspective. Also place a table with 5 chairs at the front of the room to create a stage where the players can act out their role play.

Step 4 *Role Play (15 minutes)*

Give the floor to the five participants who have prepared the role play. During the final five minutes of the role play instruct the participants to bring the meeting to a close and to make a final decision.

Step 5 *Discussion (20 minutes)*

Discuss the role play using the following guiding questions:

- Which players provided arguments in favour of the harm reduction program?
- Which players provided arguments against the harm reduction program?
- Were there players who were in conflict with themselves about the program? Why?
- Whose rights were at stake in the role play?
- Were the rights adequately defended, and by whom?
- Are there other stakeholders that should have been present at the meeting?
- Which considerations influenced the final decision of the meeting?
- Is there any way in which the outcome of the meeting could have been different?

Step 6 *Connecting Rights to Violations (15 minutes)*

Explain to the participants that they will now take a closer look at the types of human rights violations that can occur in the absence of special programs and protection for drug users. Divide the participants into pairs and hand out a copy of Training Aid 4 to each pair. Ask the participants to link the violations to the rights. After the participants are done present and briefly discuss the correct answers using a PowerPoint slide.

Step 7 *Conclusion (5 minutes)*

Conclude the session by summarizing the key message:

- Various obstacles can arise in attempting to implement harm reduction programs.

Training Aid 1 – PowerPoint Presentation

The PowerPoint slides necessary for this session are shown below. The original PowerPoint presentation is available separately.

Introduction to Harm Reduction
and
Human Rights

What is Harm Reduction?

A set of interventions designed to diminish the adverse consequences of drug use, including risk of HIV and other blood-borne infections, without requiring the cessation of drug use.

Harm Reduction includes:

- Access to HIV prevention
- Access to HIV and drug treatment
- Access to sexual health services

Harm Reduction Advocacy

- Access to information
- Access to measures to protect against disease and overdose
- Protection against cruel or inhumane treatment

Harm Reduction Advocacy

- Protection against violations of privacy such as forced testing and registration
- Freedom of association
- Political participation

Training Aid 2 – Role Plays

Select one of the two role plays and photocopy it five times, so that each player has a copy.



Role Play – Proposal for Prison Needle Exchange Program

Setting

In a municipal meeting a new proposal for a needle exchange program for the municipal detention facility is presented and discussed. The needle exchange program will provide sterile syringes in exchange for used ones, HIV screening, and referrals to drug treatment services. The meeting will lead to an advice for approval or rejection of the program. Each player has their own agenda during this meeting.

Players

1. Mayor and chair of the meeting
2. Legal advisor of the Mayor
3. Advocacy group representative
4. Prison director
5. Prison doctor

Instructions

1. Mayor and meeting chair:

As Mayor and member of the ruling party in your country, your main aim is to accommodate different initiatives, or to silence them when they are not favourable for the image of your city and your own position. Drug use and needle possession are forbidden in your country and city. However, there have been several cases of drug related deaths and crimes recently. Your aim in the discussion is to have an outcome that does not harm your image or the image of the city and that accommodates as many parties as possible.

2. Legal advisor of the Mayor:

The law of your country forbids drug use and possession. You are aware of the UN recommendations for harm reduction, and the international treaties and conventions that bind your country. Your aim in this discussion is to have an outcome that complies with legal standards.

3. Advocacy group representative:

The needle exchange program is your initiative. You are an internationally renowned expert on harm reduction, and you have an impressive international network that supports your initiative. You have a number of reports about the lamentable prison conditions, in which recommendations have been made to introduce needle exchange programs, supported by public health statistics. Your aim in the discussion is to achieve approval of your needle exchange program.

4. Prison director:

You are the director of the detention facility. You are very much aware of the fact that drug abuse is rampant in the prison, that (illegal) contribution to this by the wardens is a problem, and that there is no perspective for a solution. However, you are afraid of any project that is contrary to the law of your country.

5. Prison doctor:

In your position as prison doctor (employed by the ministry of justice) you have witnessed much suffering of inmates due to drug abuse. From a medical point of view you think that the needle exchange program is a very useful contribution, but you know that needle use is forbidden and culpable. You do not wish to expose the dismal conditions in your prison.

Role Play – Proposal for Methadone Program

Setting

In a hospital management meeting a Methadone program is presented and discussed. The program will provide for the administration, under medical supervision, of methadone to drug addicts to substitute the illicit substance on which they are dependent. The meeting will lead to a decision whether or not the program should be implemented in the hospital. Each player has their own agenda during this meeting.

Players

1. Hospital director and chair of the meeting
2. Legal advisor of the hospital
3. NGO representative
4. Medical director of the hospital
5. Nursing director of the hospital (matron)

Instructions

1. Hospital director:

As director of the hospital your main aim is to accommodate different initiatives, to avoid public problems, and to follow the demands of the ministry of health as much as possible. Drug use is forbidden in your country. However, you have regularly been confronted with drug related diseases in your hospital. The narcotics control board requires control mechanisms that you are afraid you cannot comply with. Your aim in the discussion is to have an outcome that does not harm your image, or the image of the hospital.

2. Legal advisor of the hospital:

The law of your country forbids any drug use or possession. You are aware of the UN recommendations for harm reduction, and the international treaties and conventions that bind your country, especially the narcotics control mechanisms. Your aim in this discussion is to have an outcome that complies with legal standards.

3. NGO representative

The Methadone program is your initiative. You are an internationally renowned expert with much experience on methadone programs, and you have an impressive international network that supports your initiative. You have a number of reports about the increasing drug problem in the country and the associated health problems. The hospital based Methadone program you propose has proven very successful in other countries. Your aim in the discussion is to achieve approval of your Methadone program.

4. Medical director of the hospital

As the medical director of the hospital you frequently face drug related health problems. You know that the proposed program may be a solution, but you are very much afraid of any project that may cause social unrest in or around the hospital.

5. Nursing director of the hospital

In your position as matron you have witnessed many drug related problems. However you also fear exposure to and attraction of drugs to your staff members: young nurses who go out to clubs and bars. Your fear is that your staff may be attracted to the 'drug scene' if the project is implemented.

Training Aid 3 – Connecting Rights to Violations

Connect each violation to the relevant right by drawing a line in between.

Violations¹

Investigators force drug suspects into unmedicated withdrawal in order to extract confessions.

Drug users are denied information about HIV prevention, harm reduction, and safer drug use.

A person is denied work, housing, health care, education, or access to goods and services due to actual or suspected drug use.

Drug users or suspected drug users are turned away from hospitals or treated with stigma and judgmental attitudes in the health system.

A clinic shares lists of registered drug users with law enforcement.

Rights

Freedom from discrimination

The right to privacy

The right to health

Freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment

The right to information

¹ From: *Health and Human Rights – A Resource Guide*, Open Society Institute and Equitas, 2009, Chapter 3. Available online at: www.equalpartners.info

Training Aid 4 – Connecting Rights to Violations: Answers

Copy the following answers onto a PowerPoint Slide:

Violations²

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A clinic shares lists of registered drug users with law enforcement.

Rights

Freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment

The right to information

Freedom from discrimination

The right to health

The right to privacy

² From: *Health and Human Rights – A Resource Guide*, Open Society Institute and Equitas, 2009, Chapter 3. Available online at: www.equalpartners.info