Serving Homeless Veterans Utilizing a Harm Reduction Service Model
Agenda

- NECHV data
- What is harm reduction?
- Examples of harm reduction
- Service delivery model then and now
- Challenges
- Questions
**Snapshot of FY 2016**

**NECHV Admissions**

- 732 Veterans admitted to NECHV.

- 347 (47%) Veterans identified as having a substance use disorder (SUD) upon intake.
  - 118 (34%) Veterans identified with SUD exited to permanent housing.

**Safe Haven**

- 41 Veterans admitted to Safe Haven.

- 31 Total exits
  - 17 (55%) exits to permanent housing
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 coalition).

Focus on meeting people where they are at. Emphasizes safer drug use and monitored care.

It does not attempt to ignore or minimize the real tragic harm and danger associated with drug use.

- www.harmreduction.org
Examples of Harm Reduction

- **Needle Exchange Programs** – Individuals are able to exchange used needles for clean ones.

- **Methadone and Suboxone Clinics** – Opiate agonists

- **Safe Haven & similar programs**

- **Narcan Trainings** – Narcan is used to reverse an opioid overdose. Trainings are provided throughout Massachusetts. Following the training participants receive a narcan kit.

- **Supportive Place for Observation and Treatment (SPOT)** – Medically monitored area for individuals who are under the influence and at increased risk for overdose.
NECHV Service Delivery Model

Then: Abstinence based model
  - Zero tolerance substance use policy

Now: Utilize harm reduction model and techniques
  - Safe Haven – Harm reduction low threshold model. No substances are allowed in the program however, Veterans can return UTI and are encouraged to so they can be monitored by staff.

  - Safety Zone – Area where NECHV Veterans who are under the influence (UTI) can be monitored.

  - Medically Monitored area – Nursing staff is on site to monitor Veteran’s vital signs when UTI.
Challenges

- Working with someone who is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol
- Risks: Overdoses & other emergencies
- Controversy of the Harm Reduction Model
- Psychosocial and environmental stressors, undiagnosed/untreated mental health and medical problems may create additional challenges
- Where do you draw the line? There are still guidelines and conditions to follow
Discussion and Questions
References