

THE HARMS OF POLICING & CRIMINALIZATION FOR SEX WORKERS WHO USE DRUGS



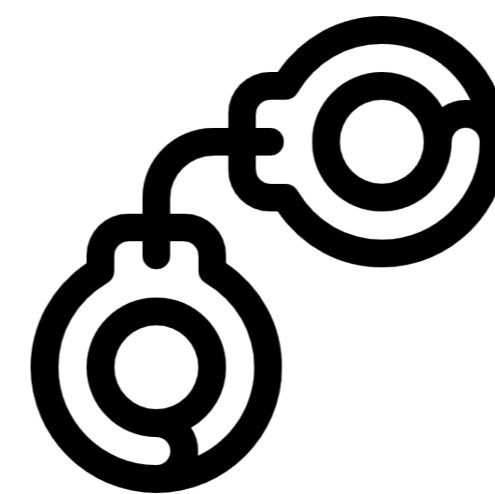
Sex workers who use drugs face significant barriers to harm reduction resources as both sex work and drug use are criminalized. Sex workers may face enhanced targeting, harassment and surveillance by law enforcement.

Police barriers to harm reduction may look like:

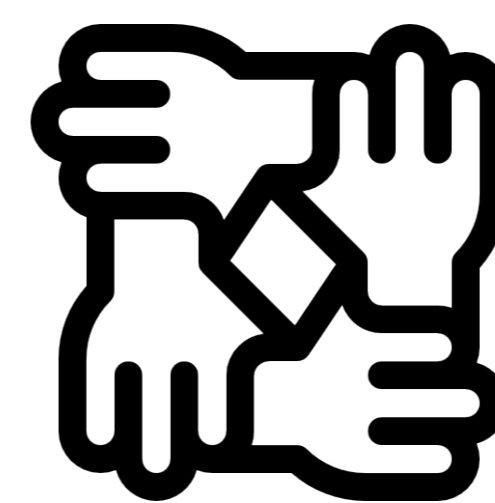
- Police actively searching and harassing sex workers and confiscating harm reduction equipment,
- The ongoing police surveillance making it difficult to access drugs and sterile harm reduction equipment.

There is greater access to peer-led harm reduction support in decriminalized environments. Rather than policing those who use drugs, communities need harm reduction services that are:

- Sex worker-friendly,
- Gender-sensitive,
- Trauma-informed, and
- Peer and Indigenous-led.

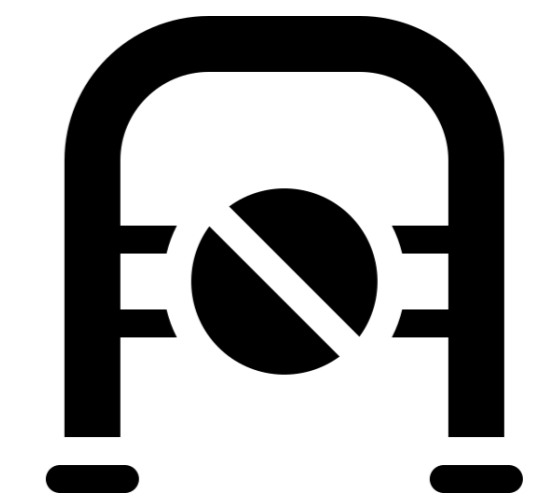


The policing of harm reduction strategies is significantly linked to unmet needs for health services, exposure to physical and sexual workplace violence and non-fatal overdose.

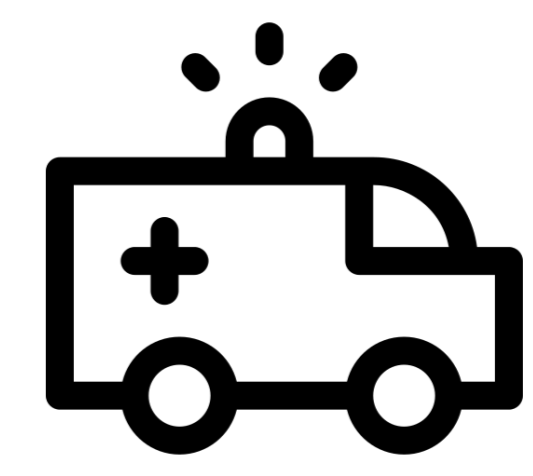


To better support sex workers' needs amidst the overdose crisis and increase access to harm reduction, we must:

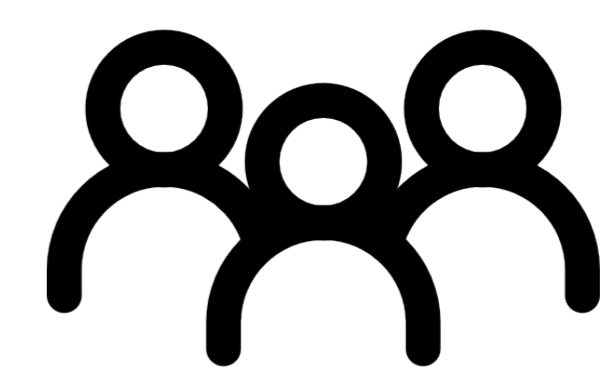
- Decriminalize sex work and personal possession of illicit substances
- Reduce barriers to accessing harm reduction supplies and health and social services
- Increase resources for initiatives that offer safe, non-judgmental, destigmatizing and peer-based supports.



Sex workers facing police barriers were 2x more likely to experience non-fatal overdose.



68% of sex workers who use drugs reported police barriers to harm reduction.



1 in 3 sex workers who use drugs experienced a non-fatal overdose.



The AESHA Project (An Evaluation of Sex Workers' Health Access) is a long-standing, community-based research project of the Centre for Gender and Sexual Health Equity (CGSHE) in Vancouver, BC. The AESHA project was initiated in 2010 and includes over 900 sex workers who work in outdoor and indoor venues, with racialized and im/migrant sex workers overrepresented among participants. The following findings on the impacts of criminalisation and policing of sex workers who use drugs are informed by data collected from 2010-2017 with **624 participants** who reported using injection or non-injection drugs.