



Canadian Drug
Policy Coalition

Coalition canadienne
des politiques
sur les drogues

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

RECOGNIZING EXPERTISE

June 23, 2021

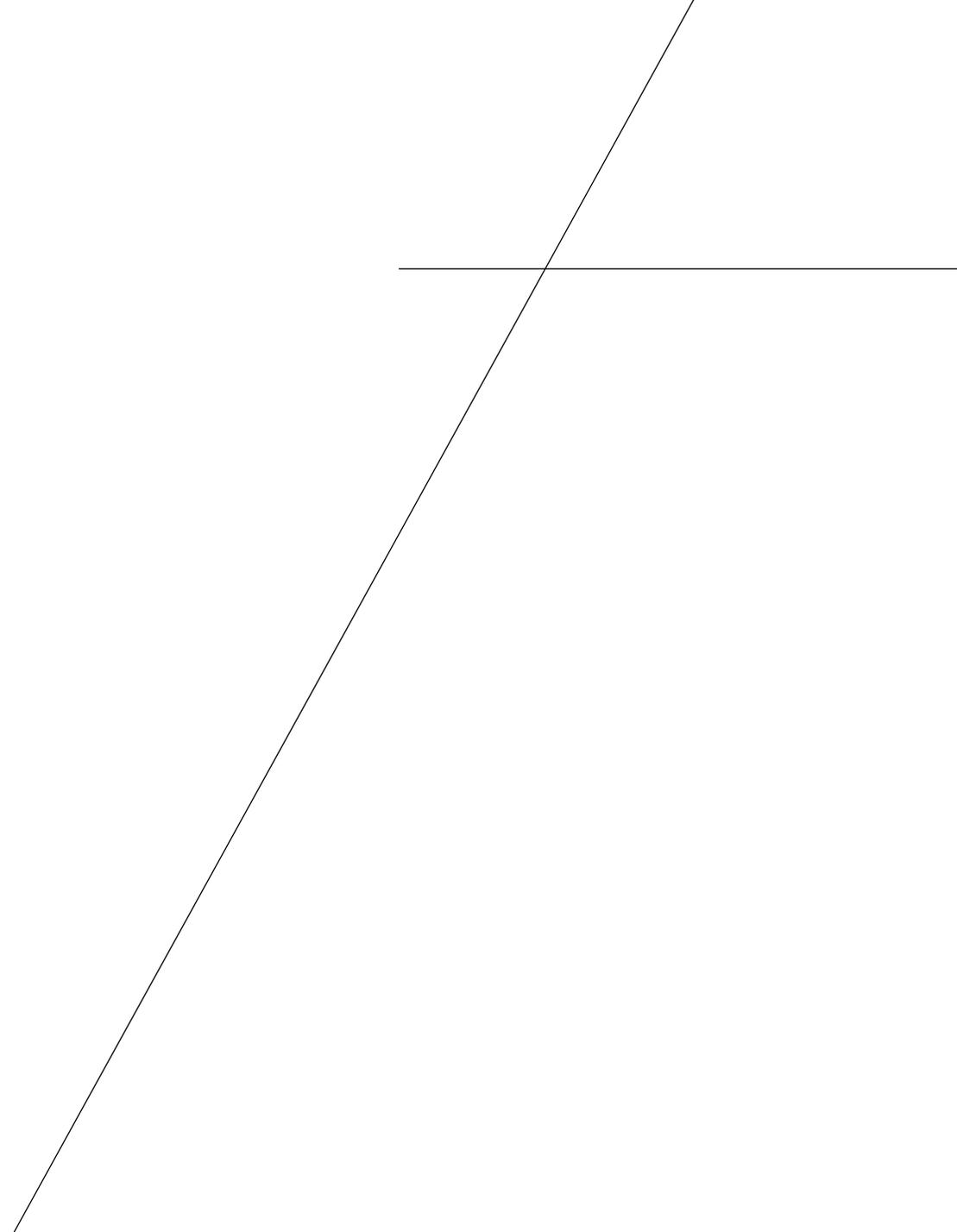


STIMULUS

Drugs, Policy and Practice in Canada
Drogues, politiques et pratiques au Canada

LAND
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

DEDICATION



RESEARCH TEAM

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Canadian Drug Policy Coalition

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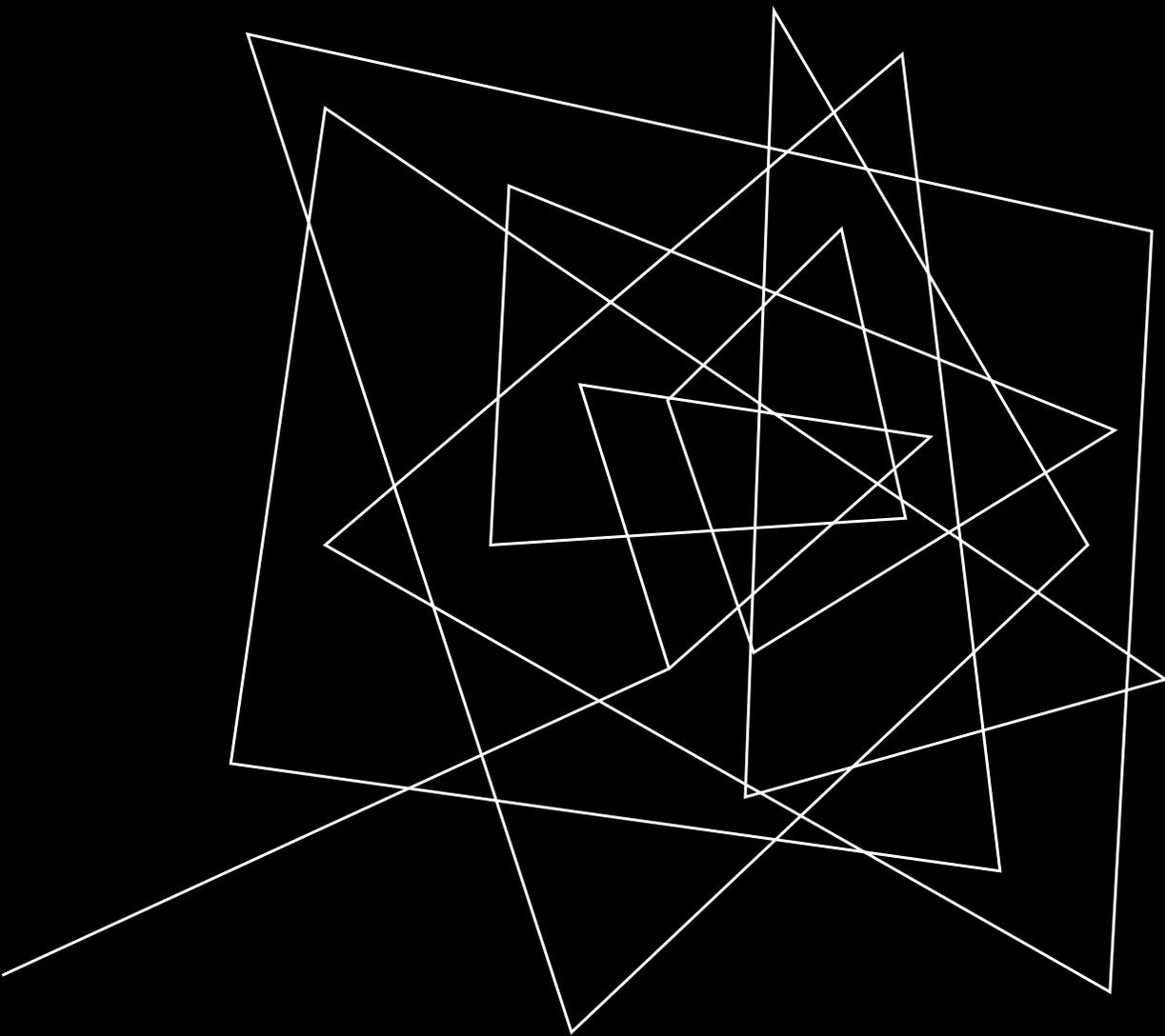
Joshua Edward, Research Assistant

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THANK YOU

To the participants who provided their valuable time and expertise.



INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

*CAPUD's Best Practices in
Meaningful and Respectful
Engagement of People Who
Use Drugs study*

METHODS

Literature review

Recruit and train Research Assistants

Research Team: develop data collection tools

Pilot test survey and interview guide; finalize data collection tools; have them translated into French

Research Team: develop sampling and recruitment strategy. Distribute online survey to PWUD across Canada

PWUD participants complete online screening survey (n=230). Targeted recruitment to maximize diversity of participants.

Eligible participants invited for telephone interview (n=66). Conduct interviews, transcribe recordings, clean transcripts

Organizational reps invited for interviews (n=18)

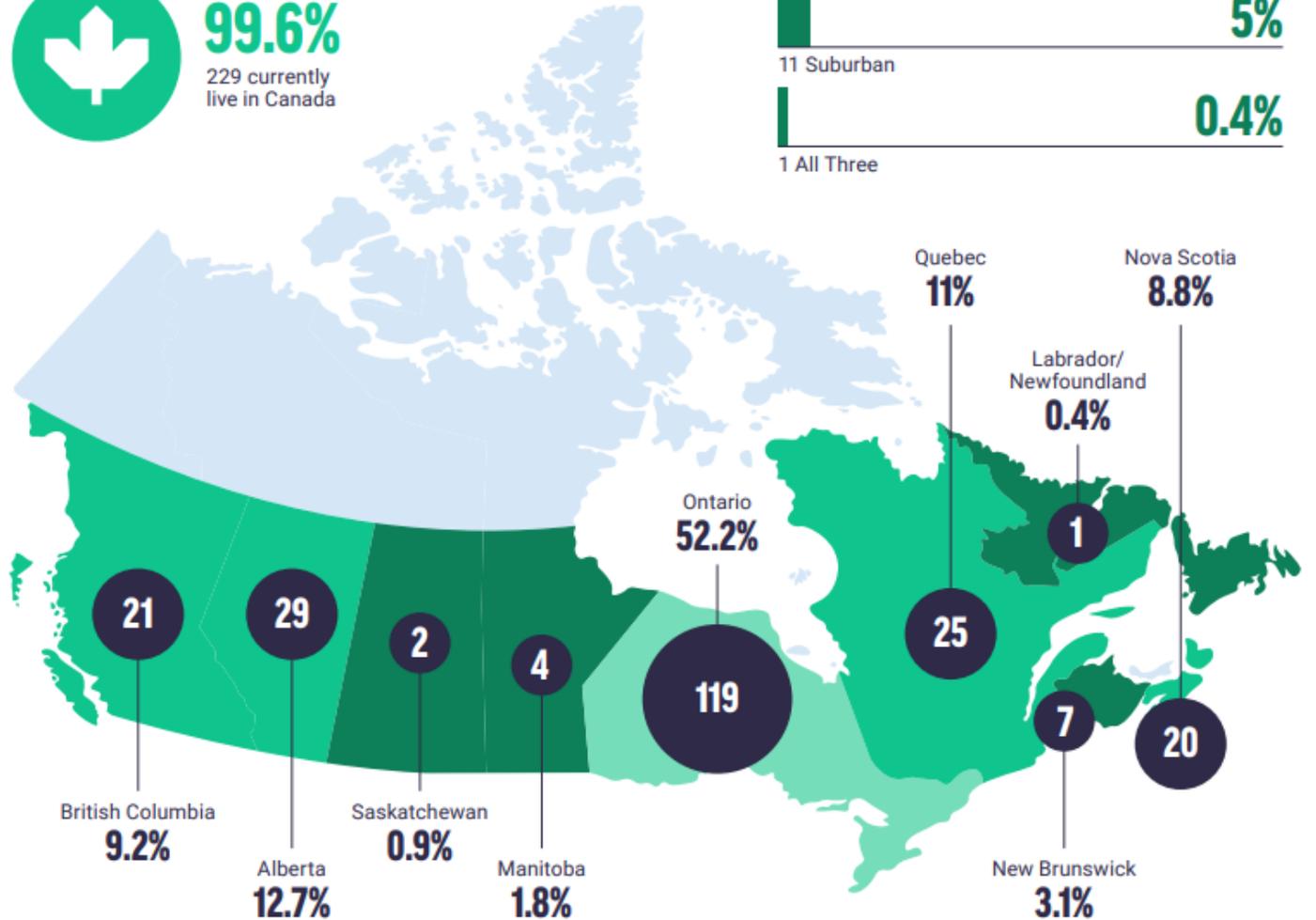
Research Team: develop qualitative coding scheme. Coded 66 PWUD and 18 organizational interviews

Research Team: interpret coded interview data and survey data. Collaborative report writing

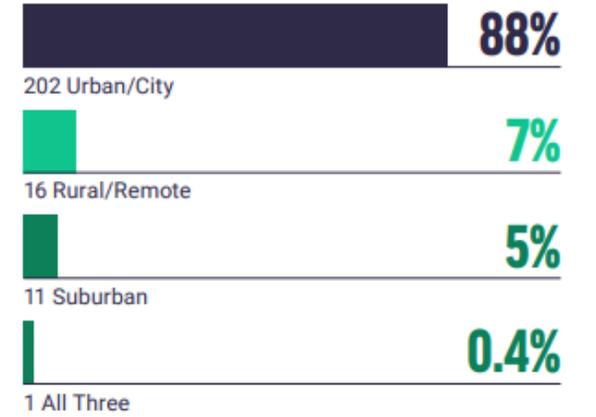
SCREENING SURVEY:

- ✓ Have used illegal drugs within 5 years
- ✓ Currently reside in Canada
- ✓ Over the age of 18
- ✓ Had experience working (for wage/salary/honorarium/stipend) or volunteered in harm reduction and/or
- ✓ Had ever participated in a harm reduction meeting, conference, workshop, focus group or other event
- ✓ Expressed interest in participating in an interview, and provided contact information for follow-up

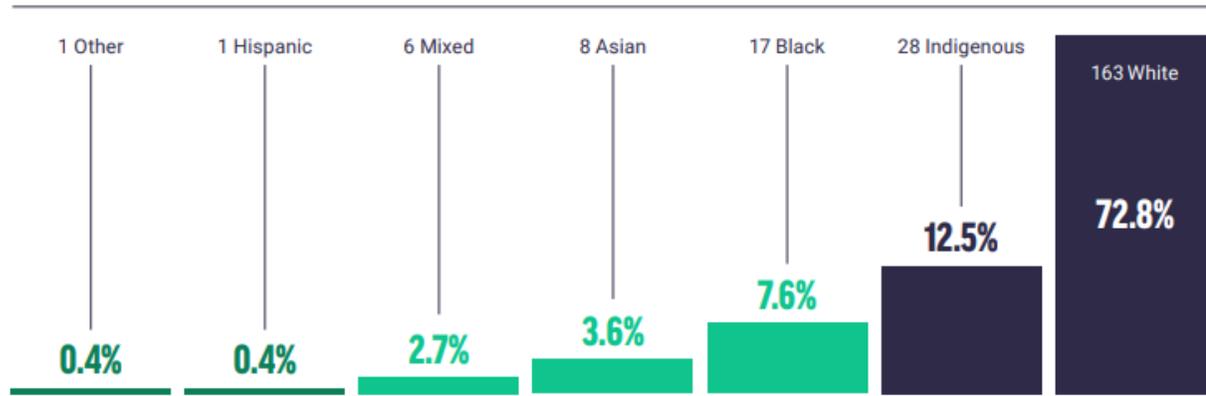
Survey Respondent Demographics



Living Setting



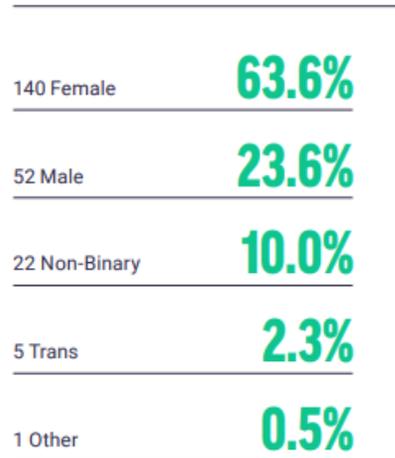
Ethnicity



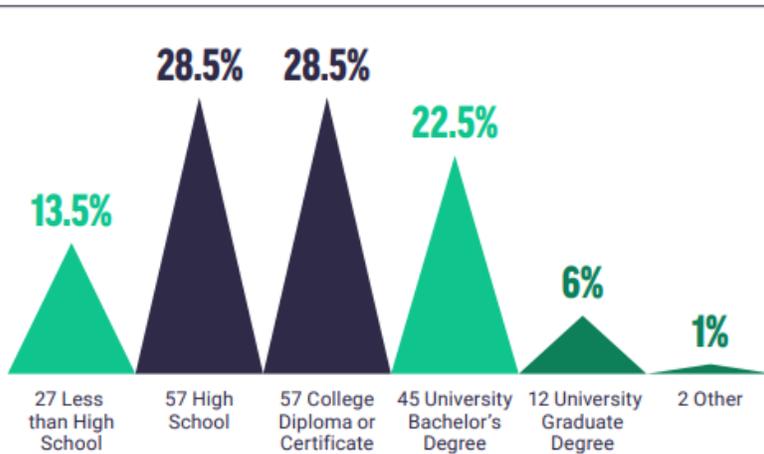
Age Range



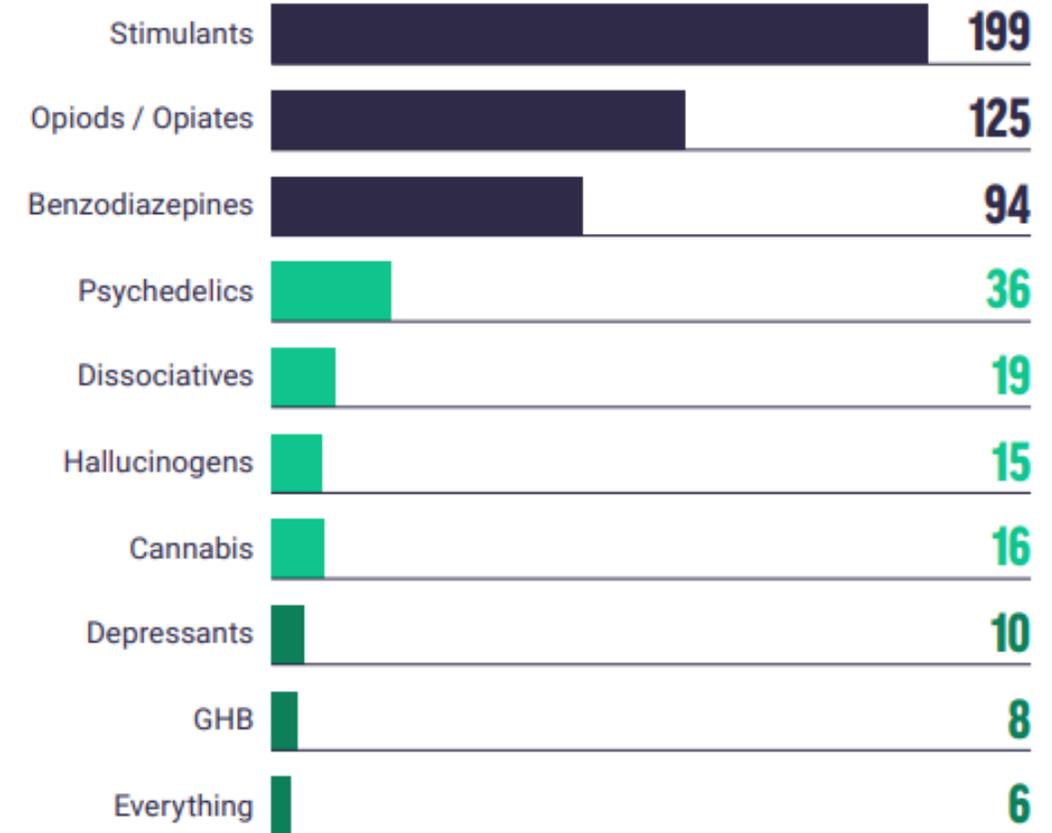
Gender



Level of Education



Preferred Drug(s)



KEY FINDINGS

1. Events - harm reduction services, including safe supply
2. Events - how and when to pay PWUD for their expertise
3. Harm Reduction Work - feeling valued and respected
4. Harm Reduction Work - job titles
5. Harm Reduction Work - training for PWUD and for their colleagues/managers
6. Harm Reduction Work - drug use at work
7. Harm Reduction Work - grief, trauma and burnout

EVENTS:

HARM REDUCTION SERVICES, INCLUDING SAFE SUPPLY

- pick venues based on the ability to provide a **full range of HR services** to PWUD participants, including access to safe supply and/or ethical drug navigators to assist with securing supply
- HR services should be provided with careful consideration of accessibility and privacy
- If on-site services are impossible, identify local/regional partners who can offer harm reduction services and resources in close proximity to the venue
- Order surplus supplies to assist in the “pass through” of HR tools to organizations or individual PWUD who can’t access them in their home jurisdiction

- ✓ HR supplies (syringes, pipes)
- ✓ Naloxone
- ✓ Overdose Prevention Sites
- ✓ Easy access to obtain OAT treatments, medications, etc.
- ✓ Safe supply
- ✓ Ethical drug navigators
- ✓ Peer Support, Indigenous circles, memorial spaces, counseling areas
- ✓ Drug testing
- ✓ Point of care HIV/Hep C testing
- ✓ Sharps disposal containers in washrooms
- ✓ On-site wound care
- ✓ Virtual “spotting” options including overdose response phone lines
- ✓ Opportunity to try new types of supplies (e.g., cookers or syringes)



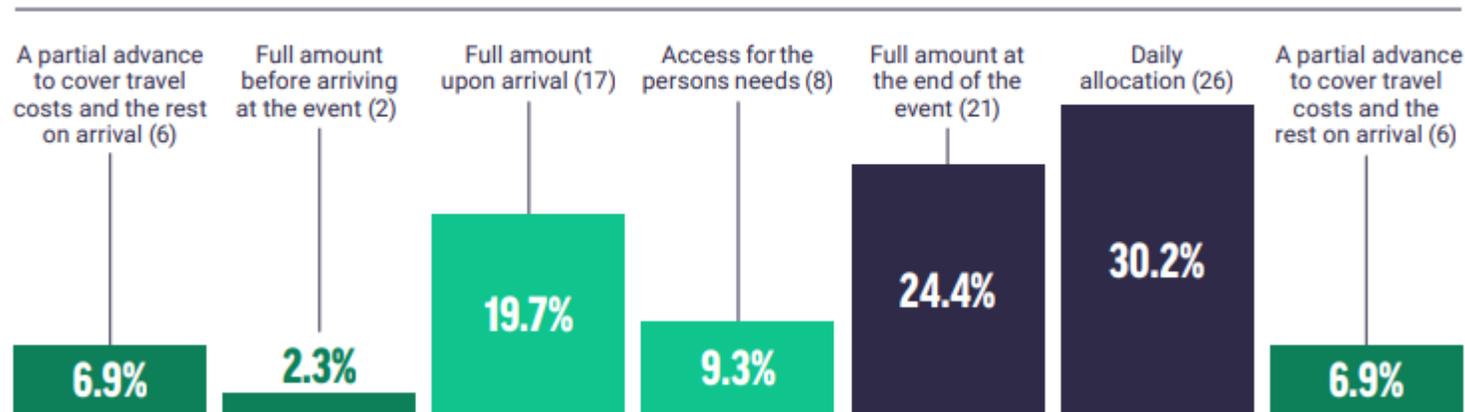
“I don't know... it wasn't my job and I like, I don't even know what the ethics around this look like. But I spent a substantial portion of my time at that conference sourcing dope for people.”

(PWUD Interviewee)

EVENTS: HOW AND WHEN TO PAY PWUD FOR THEIR EXPERTISE

- PWUD = experts. Experts get paid with money (not gift cards)
- Ensure travel and meal expenses are covered
- Payment in cash, at a daily rate comparable to the host organization's own staff
- PWUD who speak or present should be provided with an additional honorarium
- Make arrangements for transport, hotel, OAT medications, and childcare before departure
- Timing: each PWUD participant should be given the opportunity to state their preference

When should financial compensation be given so that people who use drugs can meet their needs while at the event?





“It's frustrating when you're asked to do something, but the pay hasn't been established, right away. And, the ask is, you're asking me to speak about this topic that you know, that I'm passionate about, and that obviously I want to speak about, but for some reason he didn't approach me in a professional manner by saying, “we have this opportunity, and we're able to pay this much, and are you available to fill this position that we need on the panel or as a presenter” or whatever. It's kind of like they sell the dream, and then they tell you what they can afford. And then it's up to you to decide, but you're passionate about it. And oftentimes it's like having to choose between making a difference, or standing up for yourself as a professional.”

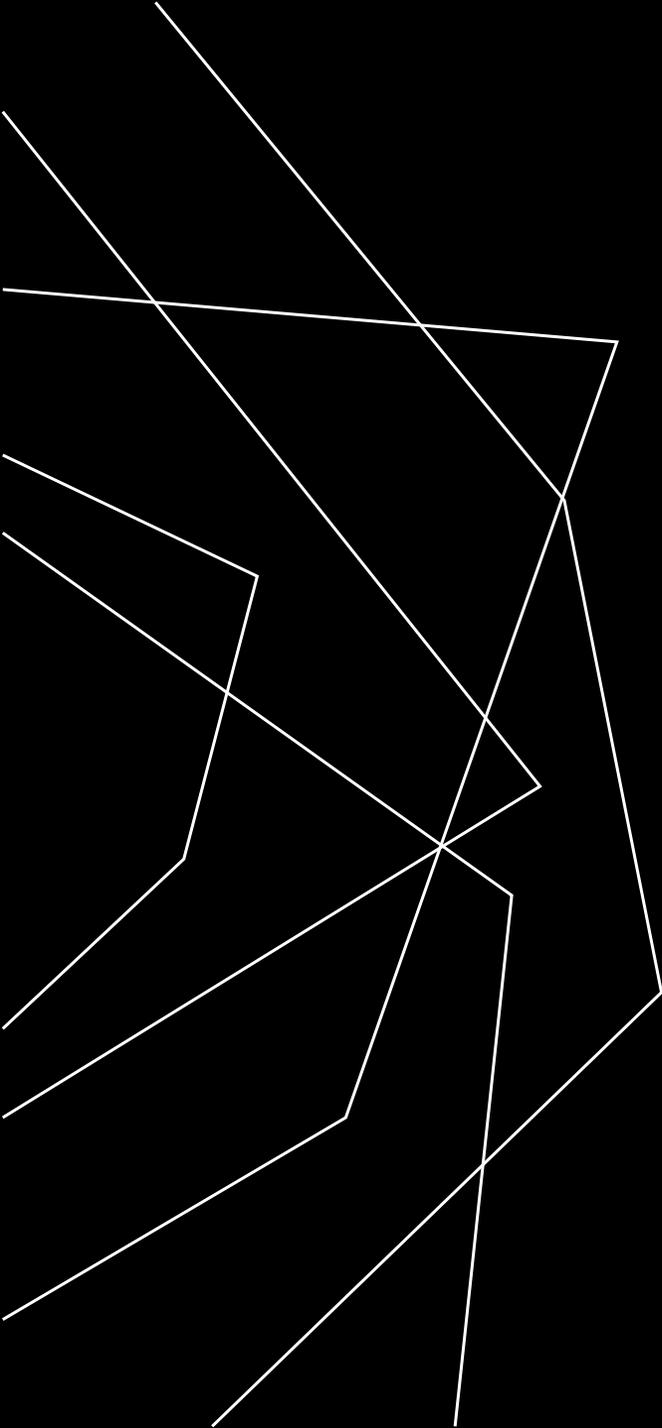
(PWUD Interviewee)



HARM REDUCTION WORK: FEELING VALUED AND RESPECTED

The following are prerequisites for PWUD to feel respected and valued within their harm reduction roles:

- ✓ A living wage that is equitable to other forms of expertise
- ✓ Strong and supportive team
- ✓ Ongoing opportunities for mutual training and skill development
- ✓ Having a job title that is meaningful and conveys one's expertise & role
- ✓ Provide letters of recommendation for PWUD workers
- ✓ Create opportunities within the organization that aren't just focused on the drugs we use
- ✓ Organizational leaders and all staff should receive training on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility
- ✓ Recognize PWUDs' expertise and incorporate their input in decisions
- ✓ Provide regular and meaningful debrief and emotional supports for harm reduction staff

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“I think if organizations actively sought feedback, like if there was like a weekly or monthly sit down, and you know, there was a section or time carved out for specifically like feedback about the work. And, you know, allowing frontline staff to have more of a say in terms of strategy and policy delivery. Because often there's not full consultation with frontline staff, despite the fact that they're the ones that are going to be implementing or responding to, or delivering the actual policy decisions in terms of like how they are felt by the service user. So I think allowing frontline staff the time, and space and encouragement to be able to really candidly talk about what they feel like the impacts of the policy will be, or provide feedback in terms of how to shape and deliver policy, that would be beneficial.”

(PWUD Interviewee)



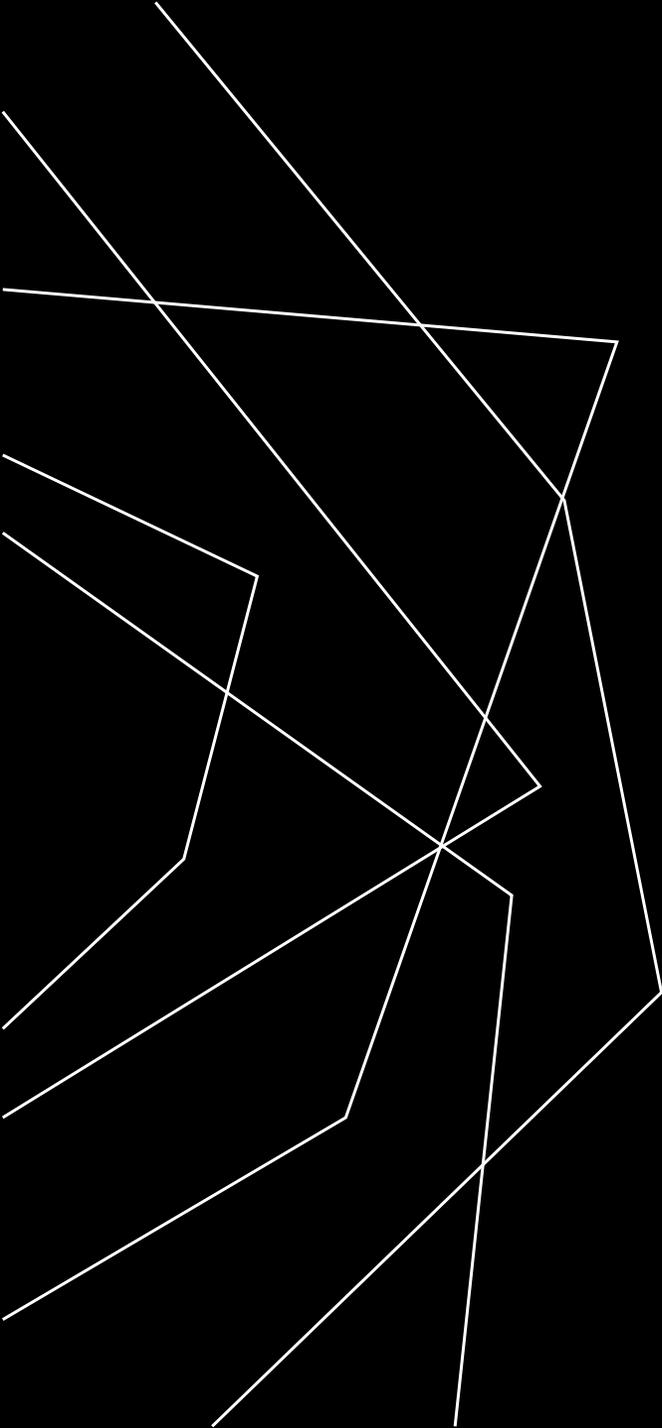
HARM REDUCTION WORK: JOB TITLES

Organizations should collaborate with PWUD workers to identify a job title that:

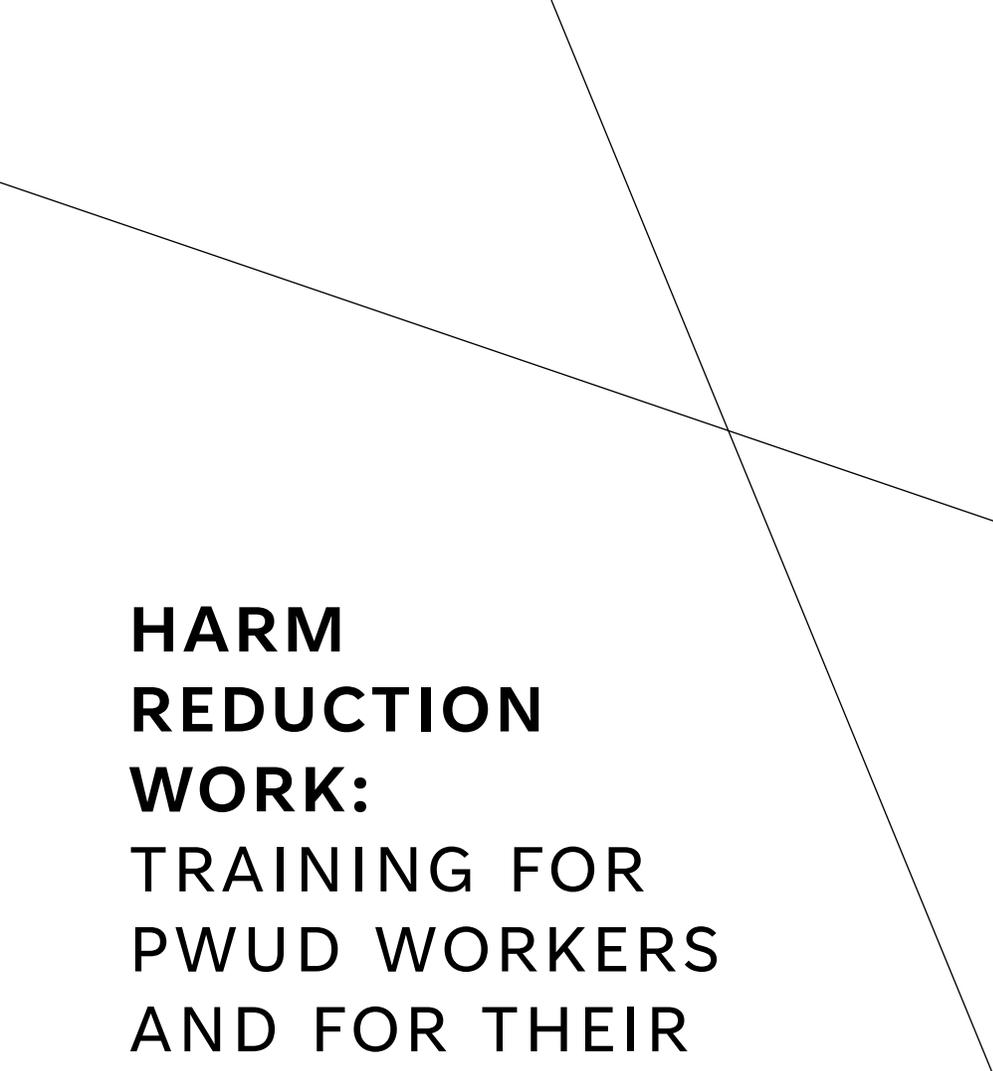
- ✓ Conveys the expertise held by PWUD workers
- ✓ Conveys the roles and responsibilities fulfilled by PWUD workers
- ✓ Communicates to clients that the worker has lived/living expertise and experience
- ✓ Does not involuntarily disclose a worker's current/past experience with drug use

Some suggested titles for PWUD workers:

- Harm Reduction Worker / Coordinator / Counselor / Specialist
- Frontline Worker
- Outreach Worker
- Drug Culture Advisor / Navigator
- Substance Use Advisor
- Program Coordinator

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“I've heard some people say that when they're working with their communities, that they prefer the word Peer, and it resonates better with the people that are trying to serve or help. But then when they step outside and trying to work with or educate other professionals, the peer title often holds them back and they would prefer, like Harm Reduction Worker, Frontline Worker, works better with people like, academics or professional type of people. So it's really interesting how a title can change people's perceptions of us, even though we're doing the exact same work.” (PWUD Interviewee)

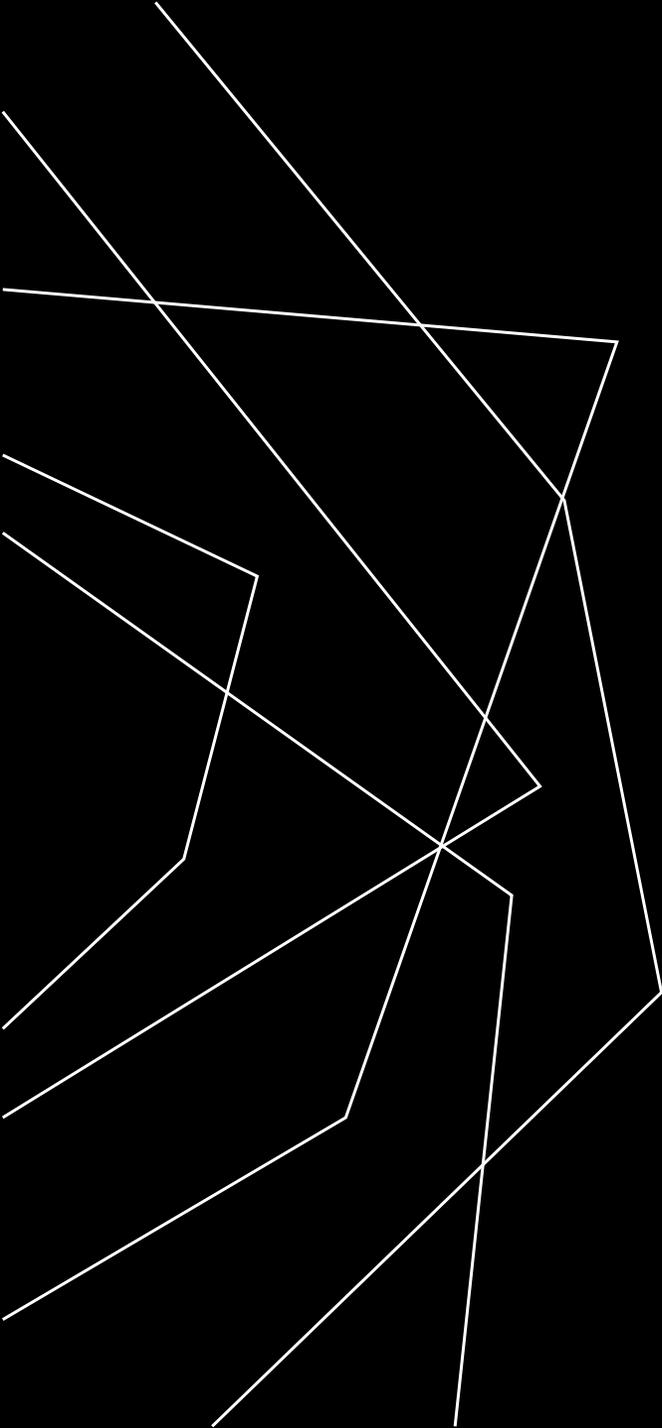


**HARM
REDUCTION
WORK:
TRAINING FOR
PWUD WORKERS
AND FOR THEIR
COLLEAGUES/
MANAGERS**

- Organizations must acknowledge the unique community-based expertise on drug use and drug culture that PWUD bring, and draw from this expertise to educate other staff and managers.
- PWUD should be supported to excel in their roles through comprehensive internal training programs.

Standard offer for new workers:

- use of Naloxone
- use of a bag valve mask and oxygen
- conflict de-escalation training
- confidentiality and healthy relationship boundaries
- self-care and burnout prevention
- anti-oppressive anti-racist approach to harm reduction
- engaging with the LGBTQ2S+ community
- how not to take work home with you
- language triggers

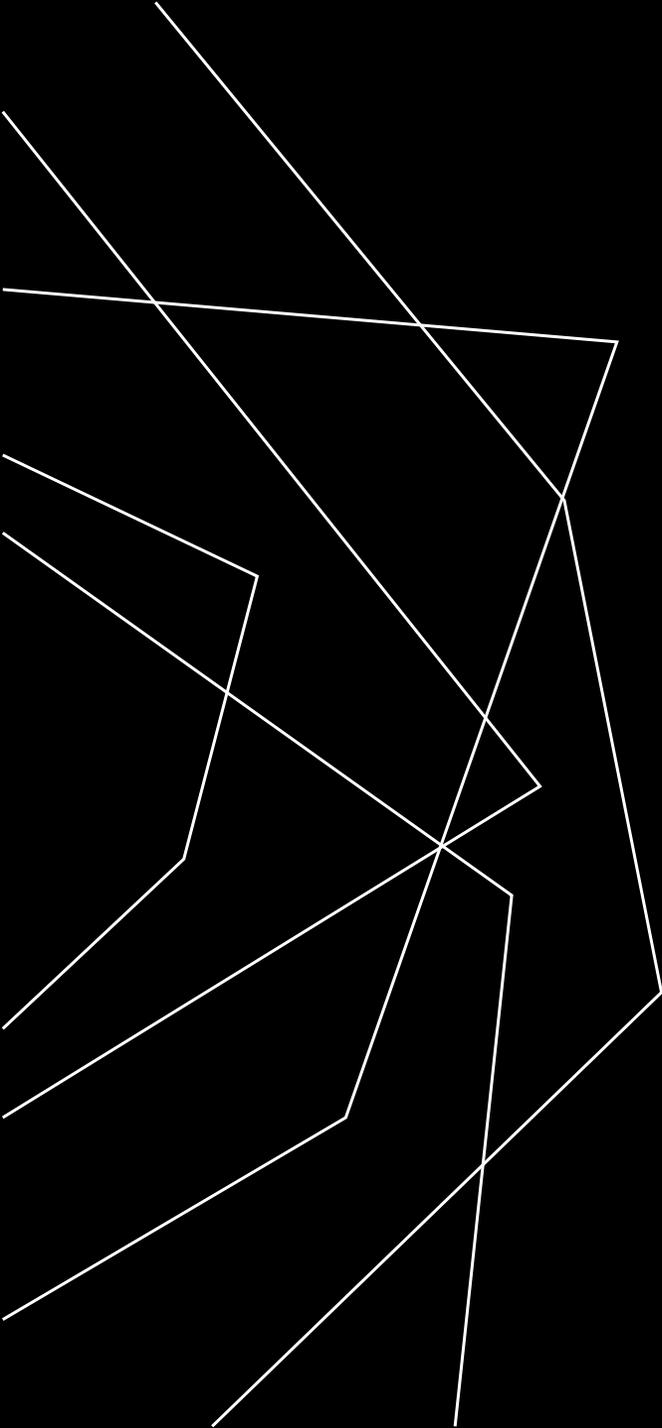


*“People who use drugs are the experts. And as somebody who isn't one of those people, my job is to help where **THEY** decide I need to. I can help and still continue to recognize that they are experts.” (Organizational Representative)*



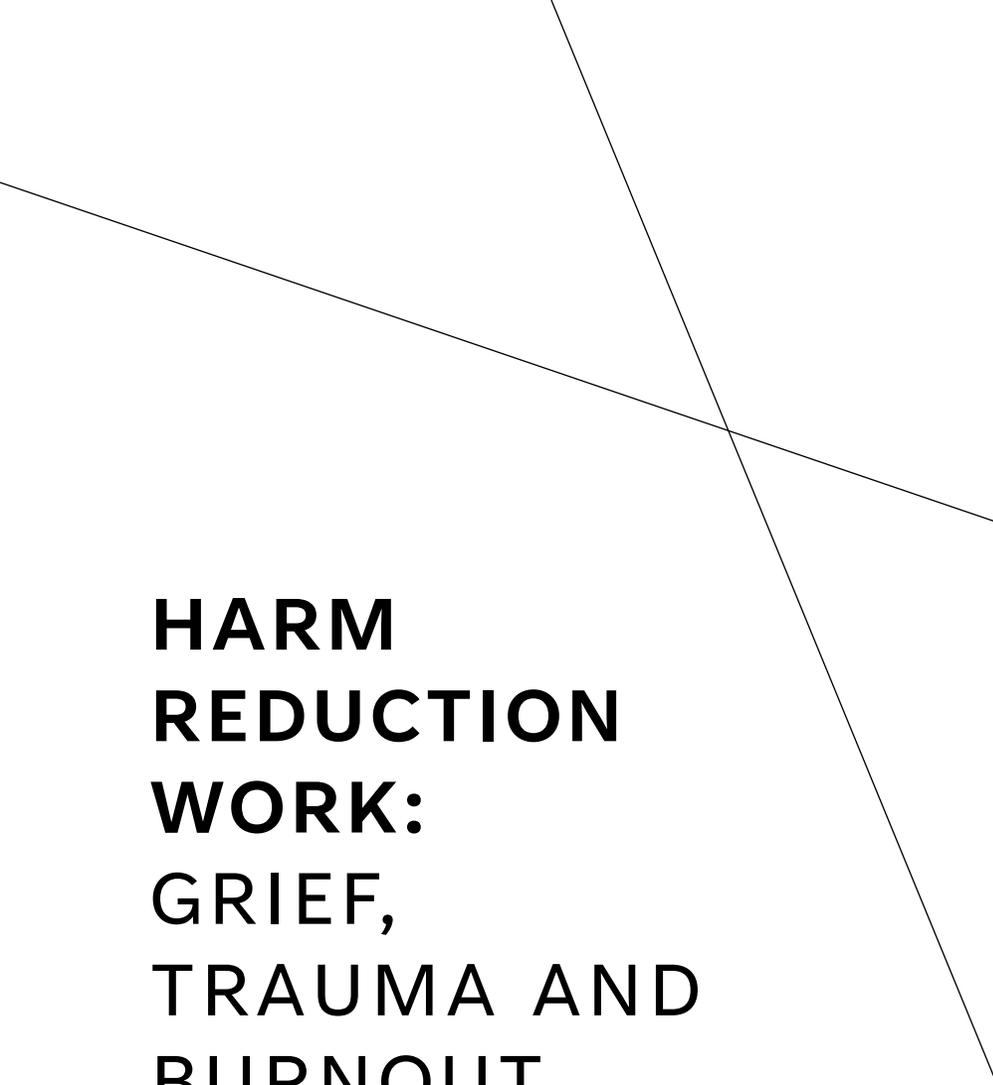
HARM REDUCTION WORK: DRUG USE AT WORK

- Harm reduction philosophy must extend to organization's own staff: create a culture of normalization of drug use, openness and acceptance for different levels of drug use
- Check yourself. What assumptions and learned beliefs are behind your reactions to a worker using while on the job?
- If people are able to perform their jobs well, there should be no judgment or bias
- Workplace policies around workers' drug use must be clear and explicit, but also flexible and realistic
- Take into account the many overlapping relationships and roles within the community of PWUD.
- Set guidelines to minimize real/perceived power imbalances.

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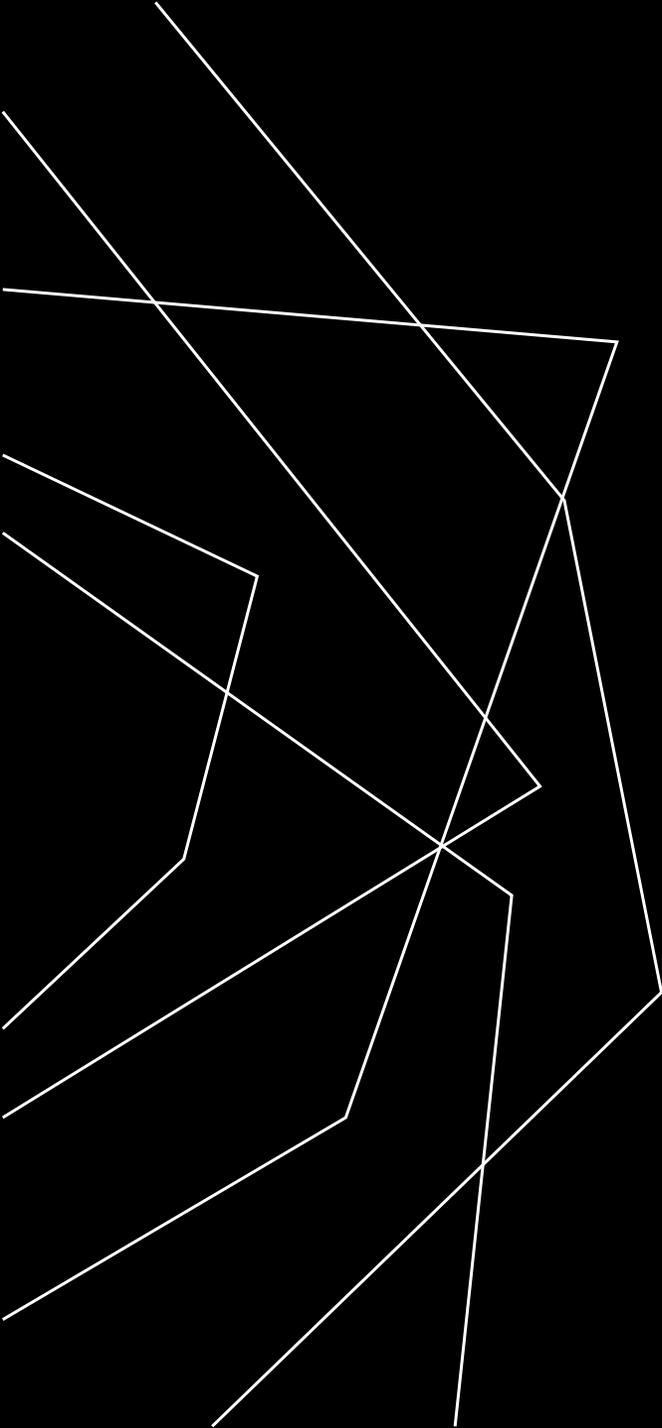
*“Our overall message is use substances so that you can stay well when you're at work, but use them so that your use doesn't impact your work in a negative way. And I think that's what people already do. I think that we're not recognizing that so many people are **ALREADY** using substances at work. People have been for a long time. Like, whether that's coffee, or whether that's cigarettes, or other drugs too. People use psychoactive drugs to maintain their productivity. So just using enough that so that you stay well and that it doesn't impact your work negatively is going to be different for each person, but it's a helpful guide.”*

(Organizational Representative)



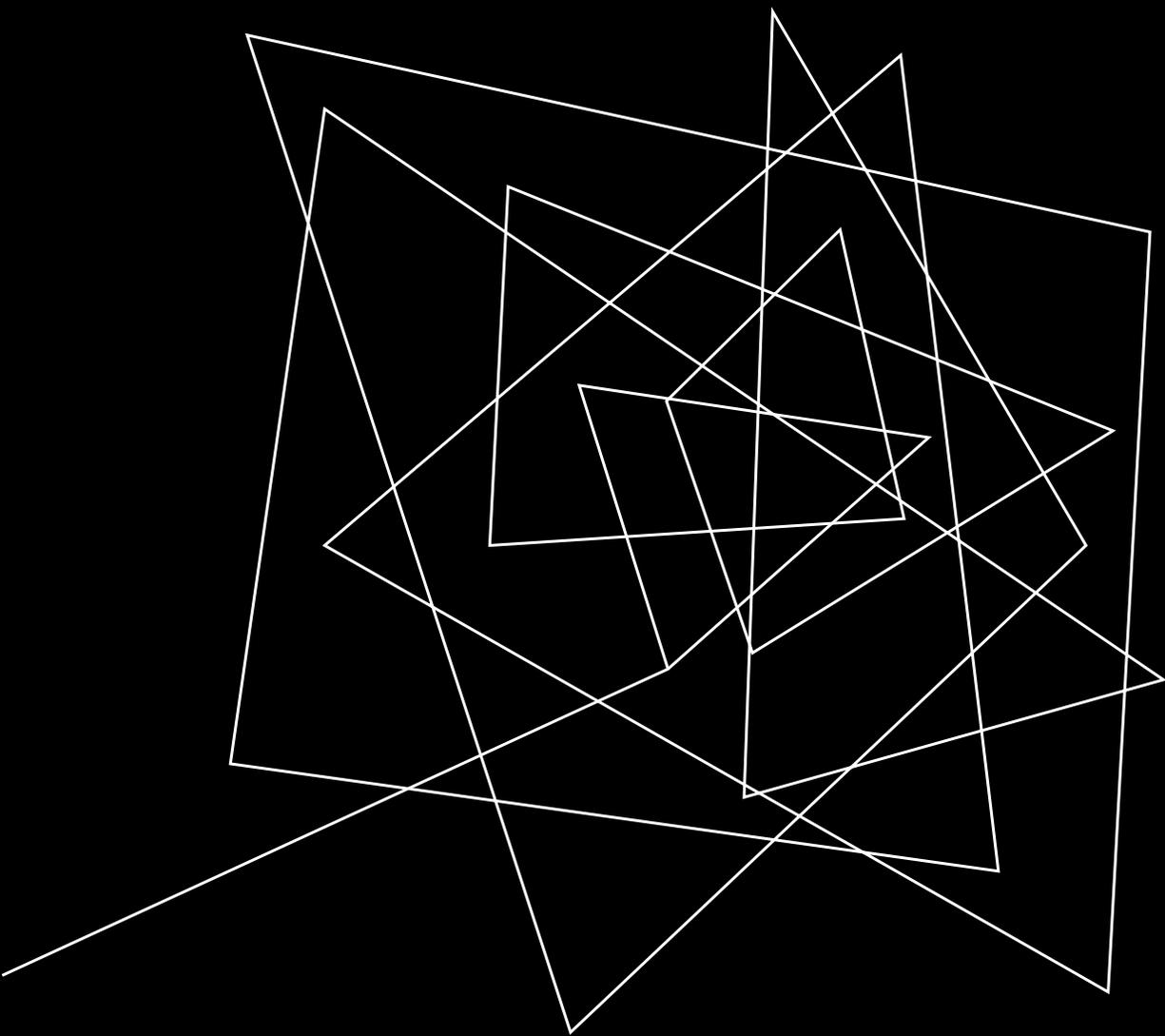
**HARM
REDUCTION
WORK:
GRIEF,
TRAUMA AND
BURNOUT**

- Organizations must recognize the trauma, grief, stress and potential burnout for PWUD workers who are at the frontlines of the war on drug users.
- Make deliberate efforts to provide genuine emotional and psychological supports for PWUD workers.
- These supports may come from coworkers (e.g., team debriefs), or from confidential access to outside counseling or therapy (through health benefits).
- PWUD workers should also have flexibility in their work schedule and be able to take time off for mental health and emotional breaks.



“I feel like the harm reduction and peer workers field...there's so many ups and downs and it's a big role. And it can mean so many different things. So regular check ins and meetings. Yeah, we're all people right, too. And the work we do is heavy.” (PWUD interviewee)

“We can never really support other people unless we are fully okay ourselves.” (PWUD interviewee)



THANK YOU

Any questions or
comments for us?