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**You can't be trusted
with a needle, but you
can be trusted with
HIV (Cooper, 2021).**

QUICK FACTS

"Prisons house the highest per capita number of persons with substance use concerns" (p. 4 Canadian Centre on Substance Use, 2004)

People who are incarcerated are 100 times more likely to suffer from HIV than those who are not; a lack of clean drug use supplies has been attributed to this (Cooper, 2021).

SUBSTANCE USE AND HARM REDUCTION IN CANADIAN PRISONS

there ain't much

**Behind the statistics
are unique human
beings:**

"I have been labelled an
"addict," "drug dealer,"
"criminal," "inmate" and
"convict", and a "danger to
the community" by guards,
parole officers, and others
within the criminal justice
and correctional system.
Many people I know have
been called much worse.
Eventually, we begin to
view ourselves through this
lens" (Fayter, 2016, p. 59,
as cited in Pollack, 2020, p.
353).

About

Correctional Services Canada (CSC)'s narrow definition of harm reduction restricts how it can be applied (Watson, 2014) Opposed to internationally agreed principles of harm reduction, CSC stated that "abstinence is the best goal but not immediately achievable for everyone" (CSC, 2008, p.3)

Harm Reduction in Canadian Prisons now

PRISON NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PNEP)

Not well known of by most inmates and staff.
Ambiguity and inconsistency in programs' eligibility criteria

OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITES

Ubiquitously understood to be a lifesaving service in community, there are currently only 2 overdose prevention sites in Canadian prisons. These have been effective in reducing harm and deaths, and more sites will likely be implemented (Hopper, 2021).

Social Worker's Role

A Brief Outline of a Social Worker's Role for Harm Reduction in Canadian Prisons

assessments

Getting to know the individual through conducting comprehensive assessments that provide us an opportunity to understand their substance use history, mental health, and other relevant factors that may be contributing to their challenges. These assessments also us to develop individualized intervention plans based on our findings.

education

We can conduct sessions on harm reduction, safe substance use practices, and the risks associated with drug use. We provide information on available harm reduction services within the prison, such as needle exchange programs and overdose prevention measures.

counselling

Provide counselling and therapeutic interventions to inmates with substance use disorders, allowing us to address underlying issues contributing to their substance abuse. We aim to empower inmates to overcome challenges and build healthy coping strategies. Along with counselling comes responding to crises related to substance use, such as overdoses or mental health emergencies, and providing immediate support and intervention.

collaboration

we work closely with healthcare professionals, correctional staff, and other stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach to inmate care. This includes coordinating access to substance abuse treatment programs within the prison or connecting inmates with external resources. Collaboration also looks like coordinating and monitoring the progress of inmates participating in treatment programs and participating in case conferences and meetings to discuss the progress and needs of individuals under our care.

rehabilitation

Our support doesn't end at the prison gates. We help inmates develop relapse prevention plans and connect them with community-based resources and support networks for ongoing care to support their reintegration into society.

advocating

We work to promote harm reduction policies and practices within the prison system, advocating for the well-being of those in our care. There are tons of ways to advocate as a social worker, one important piece is simply sharing information, like I am today.

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