



The “War on Drugs” is a war on people and has failed miserably. The most obvious harms to drug users are caused by drug laws, the legal and physical harm in which people who use drugs are placed. Here at the Exchange Union, we’ve been there, and want to help.

The Exchange Union is run by people who use drugs and people with direct lived experience of drug use. The Exchange Union is a peer lead harm reduction program. Harm reduction programs have been proven to:

- Reduce crime, making communities safer.
- Reduce the amount of funds spent in court and prison costs.
- Reduce prevalence and incidence of HIV and hepatitis viruses in the community.
- Educate about safer sex and sexual health and increase condom use
- Increase referrals to treatment programs and health and social services.

Who We Are

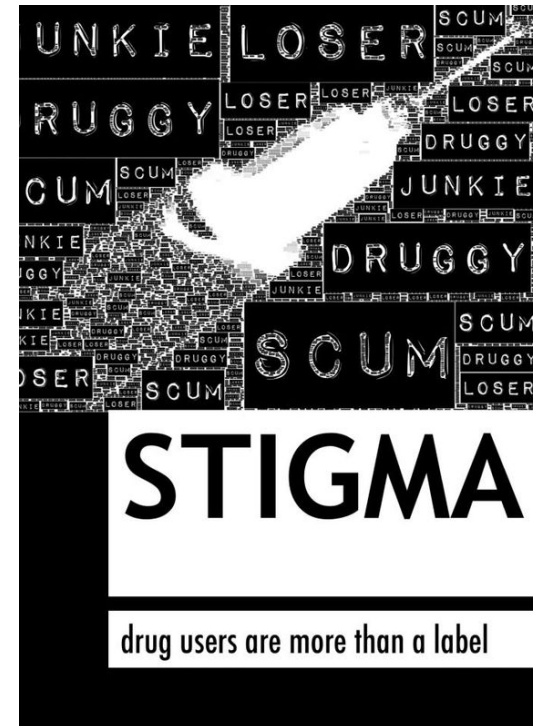
The Exchange Union is a group of people with direct lived experience of drug use, that recognizes and protects the basic human rights and dignities of people who use drugs, regardless of their position on the substance use continuum.

The Exchange Union will promote improvement in the lives of people who use drugs, facilitate positive change along the spectrum of recovery, create healing in individuals, families, and the community. We will reduce stigma thru accompaniment, advocacy, service, education, and harm reduction practices.



EXCHANGE UNION

238 W. Washington St.,
Charles Town
304-885-9150



EXCHANGE UNION

*JUDGE ME BY MY,
CHARACTER, NOT THE
CONTENT OF MY PEE*



What is Harm Reduction?

No civilization has ever been without alcohol or drugs. Humans have used mind altering substances since the beginning of time for various reasons.

People use drugs for a variety of reasons. 90% of drug users use them with little to no consequence. 10% struggle with substance misuse or substance use disorder. Addiction is a term which identifies people who are struggling with the most complicated form of chaotic use.

Our union works with people who are using drugs at any stage of the substance use continuum ranging from abstinence to chaotic use, and fights for the basic human rights and dignities for people who use drugs and engage in sex work.

Accepting that there never has been nor will be a drug free society, harm reduction works to reduce the possible harms that can be associated with drug use and sex work.

Who is the Exchange Union, and what does a Drug User Union do?

What we do as a union is we come together, we allow people to share their experiences, to talk about the stigmatization. We address mistreatment of drug users at emergency rooms, in housing. ... People who have housing, and that may have had a child overdose in their house cannot call 911, because they'll lose their housing. Think about how terrifying that is for a parent or somebody who's in school who's on scholarship, they can't call 911, or their friend can't call 911, because that person will lose their scholarship. Every choice we make, we're thinking about our own safety, and how not to be persecuted by the society that we live in. I try to say instead of 'drug user organizing,' I say 'community organizing,' because we're a community that actually stands up for itself."

-Jess Tilly, New England's User Union President

We don't provide a service that is pretty, we provide a service that is necessary.

-Louise Vincent, Urban Survivor's Union President



The Exchange Union is proud to offer peer to peer harm reduction services, which includes linkage to treatment upon request.

The Exchange Union has been trained as Directly Impacted Community Health Workers/Educators. We are advocates for MAT/MAR (Medication Assisted Treatment / Medication Assisted Recovery), realizing that abstinence-based programs, while they work for 5-12% of the population, they have over a 90% failure rate for opiate use disorders.

We are trained in drug user health and advocate for drug users to be taken seriously. We acknowledge that people who use drugs have valuable assets to share with our communities. Just because someone uses drugs, it DOES NOT MAKE THEM A BAD PERSON! We judge people by their actions, not the contents of their urine.

