

We think that choice of language matters because language carries power and helps us to make meaning of our relationships, of experiences, etc. Here are some terms that we typically choose to use as part of the Yes2SCS campaign.

Person Who Use(d) (Illicit) Drugs

This phrase refers to the fact that we are all people first, and that what we put into our bodies is not what defines us. We prefer this term to 'Drug User' or 'Addict' because both of these terms defines people in a limited way, and may also be incorrect (eg. many people use drugs without necessarily being addicted to them). The terms 'junkie' and 'dope fiend' are considered derogatory, though may sometimes be used by people who use drugs who choose these terms for themselves.

Illicit/Illegal

These are similar terms and can basically be used interchangeably; illegal behaviors are those that are against the law; illicit behaviors are forbidden by law but a person does them knowing that they are doing something illegal, eg. illicit trade of drugs that are banned in a country. What differentiates illicit from illegal is the secretive nature in which such acts are committed.

Supervised Consumption Services (Safe Injection Site, Safer Injection Site, Supervised Injection Site)

These terms are somewhat interchangeable. We have chosen to use 'Supervised Consumption Services' in our campaign because:

supervised = the fact that services would be under the supervision of health care professionals

consumption = ideally services would be provided that not only allow for safer injection but also other means of consuming drugs, eg. safer inhalation of crack cocaine (reduces pipe sharing, connects people who smoke drugs to supports, etc)

services = services could be offered at more than one 'site,' via a mobile model, and/or may be embedded in other health services and not at a 'site' unto themselves

Harm reduction

Refers to a set of interventions designed to diminish the individual and societal harms associated with drug use, including the risk of HIV infection, without requiring the cessation of drug use. In practice, harm reduction programs include syringe distribution, drug substitution or replacement therapy using substances such as methadone, health and drug education, HIV and sexually transmitted disease screening, psychological counseling, and medical care. Also see the "What is Harm Reduction? A position statement from the International Harm Reduction Association" handout!

Needle Exchange (Needle and Syringe Program- NSP, Syringe Exchange Program- SEP)

This term refers to services where people who use drugs are able to obtain clean supplies related to drug use (eg. needles, syringes, sterile water, alcohol swabs, cookers, filters, tourniquets, etc) and also dispose of their used supplies. BC Provincial policy for needle distribution has not required a one-for-one exchange of used supplies for new supplies since 2002, and 'exchange' is no longer an accurate term. Harm reduction programs in the UK and Australia have lead the way with using more accurate terms such as NSP and SEP. In addition to distribution and disposal, these services often provide HIV and Hepatitis prevention information and screening, primary health care, and referrals to drug treatment and other health and social services.

Other Related Terms

Ableism

The normalization of able-bodied persons results in the privilege of 'normal ability' and the oppression and exclusion of people with disabilities at many levels in society. Ableism involves both denying access to people with disabilities and exclusive attitudes of able-bodied persons.

Addiction

A commonly-used term describing a pattern of drug use that indicates physical or mental dependence. It is not a diagnostic term and is no longer used by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Advocacy

Harm reduction efforts often include an advocacy component, which may involve lobbying for drug users' rights, or for funding for harm reduction programs, or trying to change public perception of drug users and of harm reduction.

AIDS

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the severe manifestation of infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Ally

A member of an oppressor group who works to end a form of oppression that gives her or him privileges. For example, a white person who works to end racism, or a man who works to end sexism.

Biohazard containers

Puncture-resistant containers used for disposing of hazardous waste such as used syringes. The contents of biohazard containers are disposed of at a location specifically designed to negate the potential dangers of hazardous waste. The containers are ideally designed so that hazardous material cannot be removed once it is placed into the container.

Buprenorphine

A medication used in opioid substitution therapy programs. Buprenorphine is included in the World Health Organization (WHO) Model List of Essential Medicines.

Community-based outreach programs

These programs are an effective way to provide information and outreach services to drug users with the goal of prevention and health promotion.

Consumption rooms

A safe, clean place for drug users to inject sterilely and under medical supervision. Information, sterile injection equipment, and health services are often provided.

Classism

Refers to the ideological belief that people deserve the privilege or oppression of their class based on their 'merit', 'social status', level of education, job, work ethic, etc... Although many people suffer under capitalism, classism is relative, eg. student 'poverty.' Classism also refers to the social dynamic of privilege, or elitism.

Directly Observed Therapy

A treatment method in which patients are under direct observation when they take their medication or receive their treatment. This method is designed to reduce the risk of treatment interruption and to ensure patient compliance.

Decriminalization

Unlike legalization, decriminalization refers only to the removal of penal and criminal sanctions on an activity, which retains prohibited status and non-penal regulation.

Disability

Inborn or assigned characteristics of an individual that may prevent full participation in educational, social, economic, political, religious, institutional or formal activities of a group, or that may require accommodation to enable full participation. Visible disabilities are readily apparent and consequent discrimination or stigma may be more predictable than with invisible disabilities which are not immediately apparent. Persons with disabilities form one of the designated groups in employment equity programs. An important aspect of this definition is voluntary self-identification

Discrimination

The denial of equal treatment, civil liberties and opportunity to individuals or groups with respect to education, accommodation, health care, employment and access to services, goods and facilities. Behaviour that results from prejudiced attitudes by individuals or institutions, resulting in unequal outcomes for persons who are perceived as different. *Differential treatment* that may occur on the basis of race, nationality, gender, age, religion, political or ethnic affiliation, sexual orientation, marital or family status, physical, developmental or mental disability. Includes the denial of cultural, economic, educational, political and/or social rights of members of non-dominant groups.

Drop-in centre

Centers provide easy-to-access basic care and information to drug users.

Drug policy

Refers to the sum total of policies and laws affecting supply and/or demand of illicit drugs, and may include issues such as education, treatment, and law enforcement.

Drug use

Preferred term for use in harm reduction context, acknowledging that drug use is a nearly universal cultural behavior with a wide range of characteristics and impacts, depending on the individual user.

Drug-related harms

Include HIV and AIDS, other viral and bacterial infections, overdose, crime, and other negative consequences stemming from drug use and from policies and problems relating to drug use.

HIV

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) attacks and weakens the immune system. HIV infection eventually leads to AIDS, but proper medical treatment can delay symptoms for years.

Human Rights

Human rights affirm and protect the right of every individual to live and work without discrimination and harassment. Human Rights policies and legislation attempt to create a climate in which the dignity, worth and rights of all people are respected, regardless of age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (faith), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender, marital status, place of origin, race, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

Injection equipment

Items such as syringes, cottons, cookers, and water used in the process of preparing and injecting drugs. Each of these can be contaminated and transmit HIV or hepatitis. The broader term “drug paraphernalia” comprises injection equipment as well as items associated with non-injection drug use, such as crack pipes.

Internalized Dominance

Incorporation of superiority and dominance, and the social interaction that results

Internalized Oppression

Patterns of mistreatment of racialized groups and acceptance of the negative stereotypes created by the dominant group become established in their cultures and lock members of racialized groups into roles as victims of oppression.

Legalization

As opposed to decriminalization, legalization refers to the process of transferring an activity from prohibited status to legally controlled status.

Marginalization

With reference to race and culture, the experience of persons who do not speak the majority group’s language, cannot find work or gain access to social services and therefore, cannot become full and equal participating members of society. Refers also to the process of being “left out” of or silenced in a social group.

Methadone

A medication used in opioid substitution therapy programs. It is included in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines.

Methamphetamines

A group of substances, most of them synthetic, that have a stimulating effect on the central nervous system. Methamphetamines can be injected, snorted, smoked, or ingested orally. The popular term “crystal meth” usually refers to the smokeable form of methamphetamine. Other amphetamine-type stimulants include anoretics (appetite suppressants) and non-hallucinogenic drugs such as “ecstasy.”

Needle sharing

The use by more than one person of the same needle, or, more generally, of the same injecting or drug-preparation equipment. It is a common route of transmission for blood-borne viruses and bacteria, and the prevention of needle sharing is a major focus for many harm reduction interventions.

Oppression

The unilateral subjugation of one individual or group by a more powerful individual or group, using physical, psychological, social or economic threats or force, and frequently using an explicit ideology to sanction the oppression. Refers also to the injustices suffered by marginalized groups in their everyday interactions with members of the dominant group. The marginalized groups usually lack avenues to express reaction to disrespect, inequality, injustice and lack of response to their situation by individuals and institutions that can make improvements.

Overdose prevention

Overdosing is an important cause of morbidity and mortality among drug users, and is a major focus of harm reduction initiatives, including outreach, health services, safe injection rooms, and access to information on how to reduce the likelihood of an overdose.

Persons with Disabilities

Refers to persons who identify themselves as experiencing difficulties in carrying out the activities of daily living or experience disadvantage in employment, and who may require some accommodation, because of a long term or recurring physical or developmental condition. (see *Disability*)

Prejudice

A state of mind; a set of attitudes held by one person or group about another, tending to cast the other in an inferior light, despite the absence of legitimate or sufficient evidence; means literally to “pre-judge”; considered irrational and very resistant to change, because concrete evidence that contradicts the prejudice is usually dismissed as exceptional. Frequently prejudices are not recognized as false or unsound assumptions or *stereotypes*, and, through repetition, become accepted as common sense notions. When backed with power, prejudice results in acts of discrimination and oppression against groups or individuals.

Privilege

The experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities afforded members of the dominant group in a society or in a given context, usually unrecognized and taken for granted by members of the *majority* group, while the same freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages access and/or opportunities are denied to members of the *minority* or *disadvantaged* groups.

Risk behavior reduction

Behaviors which place drug users at risk of adverse consequences are a main focus of a set of harm reduction initiatives referred to as risk reduction for their focus on reducing the risk of drug-related harm.

Reverse racism

A term created and used by white people to deny white privilege. Those in denial use the term reverse racism to refer to hostile behavior by people of color toward whites, and to affirmative action policies which allegedly give ‘preferential treatment’ to people of color over whites.

Sex worker

A non-judgmental term which avoids negative connotations and recognizes that people sell their bodies as a means of survival, or to earn a living. (UNAIDS)

Social Justice

A concept premised upon the belief that each individual and group within society is to be given equal opportunity, fairness, civil liberties and participation in the social, educational, economic, institutional and moral freedoms and responsibilities valued by the society.

Stereotype

A fixed mental picture or image of a group of people, ascribing the same characteristic(s) to all members of the group, regardless of their individual differences. An overgeneralization, in which the information or experience on which the image is based may be true for some of the individual group members, but not for all members. Stereotyping may be based upon misconceptions, incomplete information and/or false generalizations about race, age, ethnic, linguistic, geographical or natural groups, religions, social, marital or family status, physical, developmental or mental attributes, gender or sexual orientation.

Stimulant

An agent or substance that arouses organic activity, strengthens the action of the heart, increases vitality, and promotes a sense of well-being; classified according to the parts on which they chiefly act: cardiac, respiratory, gastric, hepatic, cerebral, spinal, vascular, genital.

Substance Abuse

A widely-used but poorly defined term that generally refers to a pattern of substance use that results in social or health problems, and may also refer to any use of illegal drugs.

Substitution or replacement therapy

The administration, under medical supervision, of a psychoactive substance pharmacologically related to the one creating dependence (often buprenorphine or methadone) to substitute for that substance. This aims at preventing withdrawal symptoms while reducing or eliminating the need or desire for illicit drugs. Substitution therapy seeks to assist drug users in switching from illicit drugs of unknown potency, quality, and purity to legal drugs obtained from health service providers or other legal channels, thus reducing the risk of overdose and HIV risk behaviors, as well as the need to commit crimes to obtain drugs.

Substitution therapy

The administration, under medical supervision, of a long-acting opioid (often buprenorphine or methadone) aimed at preventing withdrawal symptoms while reducing or eliminating the need or desire for illicit drugs. Substitution therapy seeks to assist drug users in switching from illicit drugs of unknown potency, quality, and purity to legal drugs obtained from health service providers or other legal channels, thus reducing the risk of overdose and HIV risk behaviors, as well as the need to commit crimes to obtain drugs.

Syringes or needles

The main components of a syringe are a needle, a tubular syringe barrel, and a plastic plunger. Graduated markings on the barrel of a syringe are used to measure the water or saline solution used to dissolve a solid substance into liquid form. Syringes and needles vary in size and do not always come as one piece; a syringe with the needle attached is often referred to as an "insulin syringe." While

disinfection of syringes is possible, public health authorities recommend a new sterile syringe for every injection.

Tokenism

Presence without meaningful participation. For example, a superficial invitation for participation without ongoing dialogue and support, handpicked representatives who are expected to speak for the whole (socially oppressed) group (e.g. 'tell us how women experience this issue'). Tokenism is often used as a band-aid solution to help the group improve its image (e.g. 'we're not racist, look there's a person of colour on the panel.').

Withdrawal

Clinical symptoms associated with ceasing or reducing use of a chemical agent that affects the mind or mental processes (i.e., a "psychoactive" substance). Withdrawal usually occurs when a psychoactive substance has been taken repeatedly and/or in high doses.