

COCHISE COUNTY

COCHISE HARM REDUCTION

A RURAL LIFELINE IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA

In this edition of our Quarterly Insight newsletter, we highlight Lu Funk, Founder of Cochise Harm Reduction. In the heart of Cochise County, Arizona, Cochise Harm Reduction (CHR) is redefining what compassionate, community-driven public health looks like in rural America. Founded in 2019 by Lu Funk, CHR began as a grassroots syringe exchange operating out of a car. Today, it has evolved into a vital mutual-aid organization providing life-saving services to people who use drugs and unhoused individuals across the county.

Expanding Access, Saving Lives

CHR's growth has been remarkable. In 2023, the team expanded from two to 11 members, enabling a 225% increase in participant reach. This expansion facilitated the distribution of over 13,000 naloxone doses, 155,000 sterile syringes, and 1,127 sharps containers. Notably, program participants reported 134 overdose reversals with naloxone, contributing to a decline in overdose deaths in Cochise County from 29 in 2022 to 18 in 2024.

Services Rooted in Lived Experience

CHR is led by individuals with lived experience (People who use drugs, are in recovery, have navigated the criminal justice system, or have experienced homelessness). This perspective ensures services are empathetic and effective. Offerings include:

- Syringe exchange and safer injection supplies
- Naloxone distribution and overdose prevention education
- Fentanyl and xylazine test strips
- HIV and hepatitis C testing
- Wound care and safer smoking kits
- Referrals to substance use treatment and social services
- Distribution of camping gear, meals, and hygiene products

CHR operates mobile outreach routes in Sierra Vista, Bisbee, Douglas, Willcox, and Benson, ensuring services reach those most in need.



Building Partnerships for Broader Impact

CHR's partnerships with local public health agencies and organizations have expanded their reach and deepened their impact. Through community collaboration, they are bridging gaps in care and delivering meaningful change across Cochise County.

Overall Community Impact

CHR has:

- Saved lives through overdose prevention
- Reduced infectious disease risks
- Built trust with a highly marginalized population
- Created a model for rural harm reduction that's now being studied and replicated

Their work demonstrates that compassionate, peer-led, mobile harm reduction services are not only feasible in rural areas, they are essential.

Get Involved

CHR thrives on community support. Opportunities to contribute include:

- Volunteering for outreach or kit assembly
- Donating funds or supplies
- Participating in overdose prevention training
- Sharing CHR's mission within your networks

For more information or to get involved, visit cochiseharmreduction.org.