



The Rise of Cochise Harm Reduction

BY ZUSHKA BIROS | DEC 3, 2025 | BISBEE BUZZ

From Car-Based Syringe Exchange to Countywide Lifeline: The Rise of Cochise Harm Reduction

In 2019, Lu Funk, who identifies as they/them, founded what would become [Cochise Harm Reduction](https://bisbeeaz.com/blog/from-car-based-syringe-exchange-to-countywide-lifeline-the-rise-of-cochise-harm-reduction/). At the time, they operated a modest, informal syringe-exchange out of the back of their car in Bisbee. What began as a deeply personal effort to save lives has since evolved, within a remarkably brief timespan, into a thriving, county-wide organization offering comprehensive harm-reduction services across rural Cochise County, Arizona.

Their rapid growth is impressive. In 2023, CHR expanded from a team of just two to eleven staff members, a significant change that enabled a 225% increase in participant reach. With that expansion came a ramp-up in services. Their evolution from grassroots beginnings to an essential public-health provider emphasises both the urgency of the overdose and infectious disease crises in rural Arizona and the power of community-rooted, peer-led action.

Services & Outreach: Meeting People Where They Are

Cochise Harm Reduction provides an array of supplies and services designed to reduce harm, support basic needs, and reconnect people to care. CHR delivers these services via a combination of fixed-site outreach and mobile outreach routes. Their mobile schedule includes regular visits to Sierra Vista (Wednesdays), Bisbee (Fridays), Douglas (2nd & 4th Tuesdays), Benson (1st & 3rd Tuesdays), and Wilcox (2nd Mondays). For those in remote or rural areas, CHR also offers a delivery request line. Clients can text or call to have supplies brought directly to them.

Through this expansive reach, CHR addresses critical barriers in rural southern Arizona by bringing services directly to people who need them most.

Community Impact, Growth, and Collaboration

By 2024, CHR had significantly expanded its operational capacity, enabling sustainable growth and program expansion. Their peer-led, mutual aid approach has resonated with many community members. Participants often describe CHR as lifesaving, welcoming, and nonjudgmental, a vital source of care and support.

Testimonials from clients emphasize the dignity, respect, and hope CHR brings to individuals whom other systems often marginalize.

CHR's influence also extends beyond direct service. In 2025, they hosted the first in-person convening of the Arizona Harm Reduction Coalition in Bisbee, a milestone gathering that brought together peer-led harm reduction groups from across the state. The convening featured coalition-building workshops, funder panels, wound-care training, and sessions to share resources and strategies. This effort underscores CHR's role not only as a service provider, but as a catalyst for systemic change: building solidarity, strengthening networks, and expanding harm-reduction capacity statewide.

Why Support Cochise Harm Reduction — And How

The success of Cochise Harm Reduction highlights a powerful truth: when individuals with lived experience lead with compassion and community trust, harm reduction works! Their comprehensive services, from syringe exchange and naloxone distribution to HIV/HCV testing, basic needs support, peer navigation, and legal advocacy, fill critical gaps in rural healthcare. Their rapid expansion impact emphasizes how deeply necessary their work is.

If you're moved by their mission, supporting CHR is easy and impactful. [Donations](#) help keep their outreach routes running, supplies stocked, and services accessible to people who otherwise may go

without. Importantly: **monetary donations to CHR are tax-deductible** (For Charitable Tax Credit, use QCO code: 22707). You can [donate](#) with just a few clicks, and every contribution helps sustain this lifeline.

In a world where many systems stigmatize or criminalize people who use drugs, Cochise Harm Reduction stands out: grounded in empathy, dignity, and belief in human potential. Your support helps ensure that no matter where someone lives in Cochise County, help is never far away.

Get Involved — Volunteer, Join the Board, Support the Work

Volunteering: CHR welcomes volunteers to help with kit assembly, meal preparation, clothing processing, outreach logistics, and more. Their volunteer program is open to people with lived experience, and CHR emphasizes a no-judgment culture.

Board membership: CHR is actively recruiting more board members. They're looking for folks with a range of backgrounds and skills: non-profit leadership, harm reduction experience, large-scale fundraising, accounting/financial management, and people with lived experience.

Meet Us At the Bisbee Community Market!

Stop by the CHR table at the Bisbee Community Market, located at Vista Park, on Saturday, December 20th, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Check out their new line of merchandise for sale, free supplies, and plenty of handout information. Plus, the opportunity to meet some of the Board members and staff!

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