

DRUG POLICY ALLIANCE

Reason. Compassion. Justice.

Four Pillars of Effective Drug Policy for New York: Prevention, Treatment, Enforcement, Harm Reduction

Policy Checklist: Prevention

- Increase employment and educational opportunities in communities – such as green collar jobs-- to strengthen families and promote economic growth.
- Eliminate wasteful and ineffective government-sponsored prevention programs that rely on scare tactics, such as D.A.R.E., the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, and random student drug testing.
- Increase funding for after-school programs and integrated substance abuse treatment for adolescents.
- Develop better prevention campaigns based on peer-reviewed research that focus on reducing individual, family, and community harm associated with substance use.
- Support reality-based drug education programs in schools, like Safety First, www.safety1st.org.
- Enact sentencing reforms and expand use of alternatives to incarceration, which are cheaper and often more effective for securing public safety and accountability.
- End city police policies that waste scarce tax payer resources on low-level marijuana arrests.
- Include “Racial Impact Statements” on all criminal justice and drug law legislation as a means of reducing unwarranted racial disparities.

Policy Checklist: Enforcement

- Re-prioritize federal anti-drug law enforcement resources toward violent drug cartels.
- Focus local and state drug law enforcement on people who commit crimes against people or property by shifting focus away from nonviolent drug offenses.
- Set clear statutory goals for the disruption of major illegal drug operations and require agencies to report on them.
- Improve law enforcement training on arresting individuals when children are present to reduce the emotional damage to children and help parents understand their rights.
- Restore judicial discretion by eliminating mandatory minimum sentencing statutes for drug-related offenses.

Policy Checklist: Harm Reduction

- Make sterile syringes more available and increase funding for safer-injection and prevention programs.
- Deregulate the sale of syringes through pharmacies.
- Decriminalize syringe possession to align the penal code with existing public health law, which would increase access to sterile syringes.
- Ensure syringe exchange programs are adequately funded.
- Eliminate regulatory and zoning barriers to syringe exchange programs and services.
- Repeal the federal ban on using HIV/AIDS prevention funding for syringe exchange.
- Encourage people to call 911 when they believe they’re witnessing an accidental drug overdose by enacting Good Samaritan immunity policies.
- Make Naloxone – an opioid antagonist that reverses the effects of an overdose and prevents death – widely available to people who use pharmaceutical and illicit opiates.

Policy Checklist: Treatment

Make a variety of substance abuse treatment programming more widely available and culturally accessible:

- Make community-based treatment available to all who need it as often as they need it.
- Integrate harm reduction practices into treatment modalities.
- Divert people convicted of low-level drug-related offenses into drug treatment and other alternatives to incarceration.
- Ensure treatment programs are accessible and culturally appropriate for populations who have faced unique obstacles to effective treatment in the past, such as women, people of color, at-risk youth, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals, and rural and low-income communities.
- Make methadone available in doctors' offices and in the criminal justice system, such as the KEEP program on Riker's Island.
- Increase funding for replacement therapy research to find the equivalent of methadone and buprenorphine replacements for other drugs.
- Allow individuals to deduct the costs associated with substance abuse treatment from their taxes.
- Eliminate zoning and other regulatory obstacles to opening new treatment centers.
- Integrate treatment programming with job training and placement, housing, education, and other necessary services.
- Make a range of programs available that account for the varying needs of diverse populations and avoid "one-size fits all" approaches.

Keep families together:

- Increase funding for family treatment programs.
- Increase funding for treatment programs designed for pregnant and parenting women.
- Establish programs that will pay for child care in areas where no treatment programs exist that provide child care services.
- Enact treatment immunity policies that shield parents who seek drug treatment from having their children taken away.
- Evaluate state and city prisons on their ability to transport incarcerated parents to custody hearings.
- Find ways to increase the ease and quality of family members' visits to prison, and make family caseworkers available in prison.
- Expand re-entry services to help parents returning from prison get their children back into their lives, including expanding housing, employment, education and substance abuse treatment services.
- Eliminate barriers to re-entry for people returning to their communities from prison, such as laws that prohibit people with drug convictions from accessing school loans, public housing, and public assistance.
- Eliminate programs that stigmatize people convicted of drug offenses, such as public databases of "drug offenders."

Improve mental health services:

- Remove barriers separating substance abuse treatment from mental health services.
- Fund research examining root causes of drug abuse, and better practices for treating individuals with dual diagnoses.