



Rapid Scaling of Harm Reduction Through Community and Government Partnership

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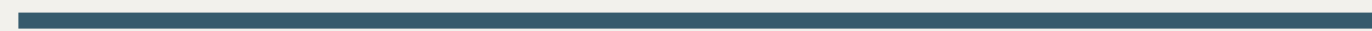
Harm Reduction at the Sierra Health Foundation

- SHF and The Center at Sierra Health Foundation work use private philanthropic funds to incubate projects promoting racial justice and health equity and leverage public funds in partnership with local, state, and federal governments.
- With the CA Department of Public Health and National Harm Reduction Coalition, we manage California's major investment in harm reduction services.

What happened in California?



2015–2016 was an inflection point for California harm reduction, leading to large increases in funding and access to services and positive changes in public policy and law.





2017: 38 SSPs in 22 counties + 2 cities



Orange County →

2025: 96 SSPs in 35 counties

2016

156,772 people served

15.8 million syringes distributed

30% did needs-based access

13,368 naloxone kits distributed

38% always had sufficient naloxone

1 SSP distributed pipes

2023

223,505 people served

17.6 million syringes distributed

Down from peak of 26.3 million in 2021

87% did needs-based access

941,736 naloxone kits distributed

86% always had sufficient naloxone

57 SSPs distributed pipes

Statewide Funding

2006

First state funding (\$9 million)

2009

Funding terminated amid HIV cuts during national recession

2016

Harm Reduction Supplies Clearinghouse
(\$3 million/year, later \$6 million)

2018

State Naloxone Distribution Project (~\$80 million),
MAT Expansion (\$100s of millions)

2019

CA Harm Reduction Initiative
(\$15.2 million over 4 years)

2024

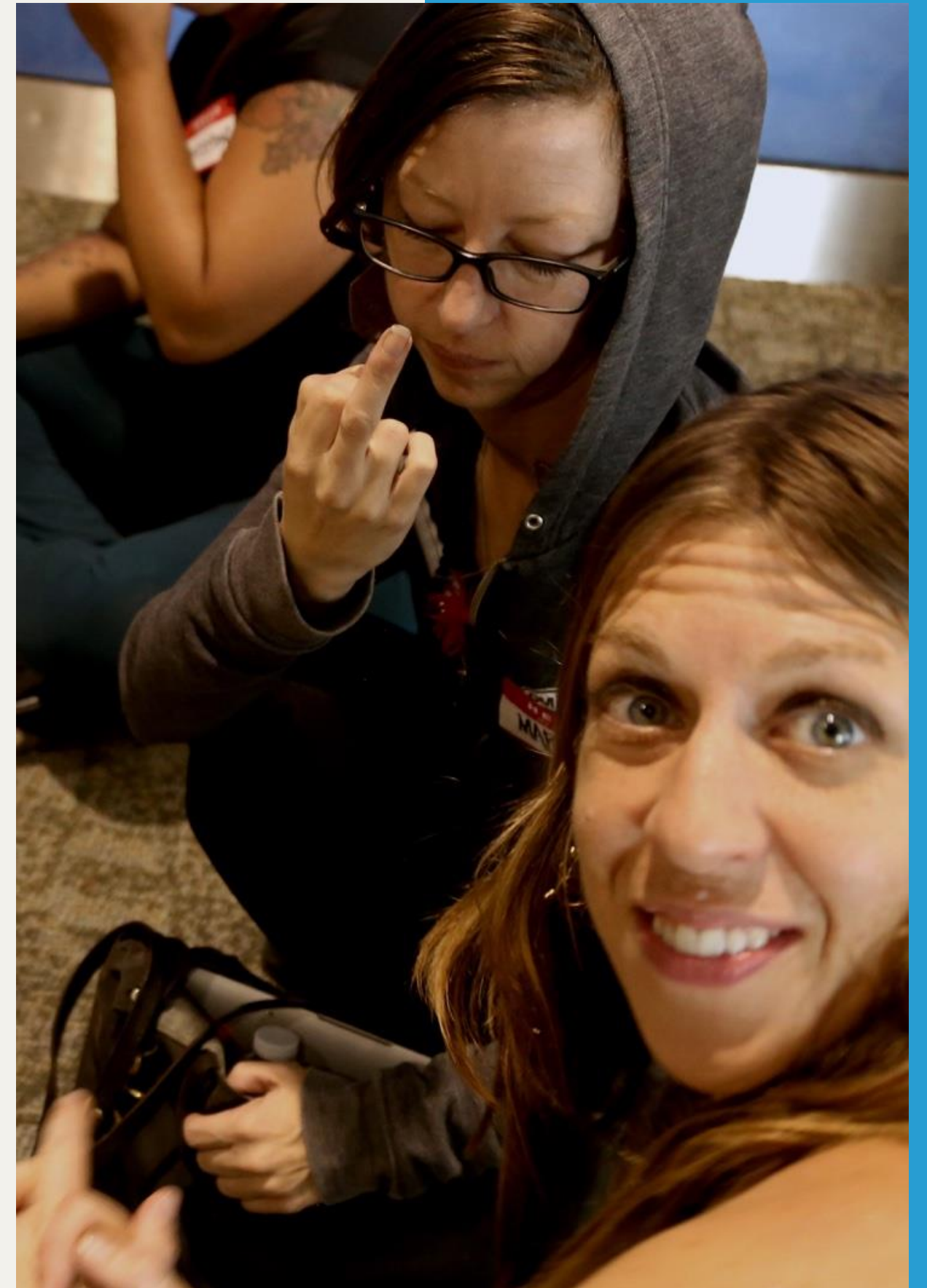
COPHRI (\$62 million over 4 years)

Major Instruments of Change



Community-Government Collaboration

1. Getting authentic harm reductionists into government roles
2. Internal Education and Culture Change
3. Information sharing → policy change
4. Creating systems to manage resources



Unwavering Support

1. Create systems in government to stick with the magical people who want to start new harm reduction programs.
2. Hold government to standing with local organizations when things get hard.
 - Orange County Needle Exchange Project
 - Northern Valley Harm Reduction Coalition
 - Harm Reduction Coalition of Santa Cruz County
 - Yuba-Sutter Harm Reduction Coalition
 - Sierra Harm Reduction Coalition
 - Harm Reduction Institute



Results: Policy & Legal Change

- Assertive state SSP authorization process
- Sharply reduced barriers to widespread naloxone access
- Repeal of conditions on legal syringe possession
- State support for safer smoking equipment
- SSP exemption from state environmental protection law
- Large expansion of MOUD access, greater prescribing flexibility, mobile methadone services

What's Next?



Disruption and uncertainty from the temporary fascist capture of the U.S. federal government

California state and local governments in a law-and-order phase

Left policies are popular, left organizing isn't happening at scale

Next 20 months are crucial period for protecting gains,
shoring up alliances

Medi-Cal integration might be a bright spot for sustaining funding



Thank you

- Everyone working in harm reduction programs in California.
- The first wave founders who we all grew from.
- Friends at the CA Department of Public Health and LA County Department of Health Services who informed this, especially Alessandra Ross, Shoshanna Scholar, and Loris Mattox.
- Friends at National Harm Reduction Coalition and The Center at Sierra Health Foundation who are building much of this work.