

Police response to gender-based violence among women who use drugs: practices and possibilities

On-line webinar

Preliminary date: 16th of December 2021 (TBD)

10.00-13.30 Kyiv time

Description

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one-in-three women experiences intimate partner violence¹. Women who use drugs are three-to-five times more likely to experience gender-based violence than women in general².

Women who use drugs and/or are involved in drug trafficking face multiple, mainly gender-based, stigmas and discrimination in society. They tend to have lower social and economic status within the community of people who use drugs which means that they face multiple health risks and barriers when trying to access services intended for survivors of gender-based violence.

Such barriers may include punitive and discriminatory practices by police and health care professionals; increased stigma associated with negative attitudes in society towards women who use drugs; harm reduction services and drug treatment programmes that do not meet the needs of women; lack of sexual and reproductive health services for people who use drugs; and limited access to harm reduction programmes^{3, 4}.

Criminalisation of drug use often means that when faced with gender-based violence, women who use drugs suffer structural abuse at the hands of police officers, health and social services, instead of being given protection. Instead of providing security and support services police may charge a woman with drug use and trafficking and also inform social services which may lead to loss of parental rights.

The aim of the on-line webinar event is to build capacity and knowledge about effective police approaches in provision of help and protection to women using drugs in case of domestic and intimate partner violence. During the webinar there will be an opportunity to learn about internationally recommended approaches and best practices of police response focused on ensuring security and referral to health, social care services and shelters for women.

Language: English-Russian (with simultaneous translation)

Duration: 3 hours

¹ Violence against women. Strengthening the health response in times of crisis. Geneva; World Health Organization, 23 November 2018. <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/feature-stories/detail/violence-against-women>

² El-Bassel N, Gilbert L, Witte S, Wu E, Chang M. Intimate Partner Violence and HIV Among Drug-Involved Women: Contexts Linking These Two Epidemics—Challenges and Implications for Prevention and Treatment. *Substance Use & Misuse*, Vol. 46, Issue 2-3, 2011, pp295-306. <https://doi.org/10.3109/10826084.2011.523296>

³ El-Bassel, Op.cit.

⁴ Pinkham S, Malinowska-Sempruch K. Women, Harm Reduction, and HIV. New York; International Harm Reduction Development Program, Open Society Institute, 2007. https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/c47ab575-6642-423c-8f40-dd33f16b5271/women_20070920.pdf

Countries: Central/ Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Participants

- Police officers and police station employees.
- Police academy students
- Representatives of Ministry of interior responsible for police response on gender-based violence.

Speakers and presenters

1. UNODC – introduction/ actualization of the issue
2. UNFPA – presentation of the Standard Operating Procedures⁵ for police in response to gender-based violence
3. EHRA - a brief overview of challenges faced by women who use drugs in EECA countries
4. Community of women using drugs presenting specific cases to analyse the police response on violence
5. Presentation of international experience in provision of help to women using drugs in case of gender based violence in European countries (TBD: Peter Muyschondt, Belgium/ Nick Croft, Law enforcement Network).
6. Presentation of Ukrainian algorithm of police actions to help to women using drugs in case of gender based violence

⁵ <https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/publications/police-services-provision-standard-operating-procedures>