

# Harm Reduction in Pediatric Populations in Hartford

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## Objectives

This project aims to educate students on harm reduction strategies for pediatric populations, focusing on reducing risky behaviors and promoting safety for children up to 18 years old in the greater Hartford area. Through research, interactive simulations, and practical outreach, students develop the skills to communicate health information effectively to children, practice emergency interventions such as Narcan administration and Stop the Bleed, and advocate for sustainable, safe habits. Ultimately, the project seeks to prepare future healthcare providers to implement harm reduction techniques in pediatric care while fostering teamwork, cultural humility, and patient-centered values.

- Deliver injury prevention education for children and families
- Teach overdose response skills, including naloxone use
- Provide bleeding control training aligned with Stop the Bleed principles
- Create age-appropriate health education materials
- Encourage interprofessional collaboration to enhance community outreach in the greater Hartford area

## Background

Children and adolescents are uniquely vulnerable to preventable injury due to developing cognition, limited risk awareness, and dependence on caregivers. Unintentional injuries remain the leading cause of death for ages 1–19 in the U.S., surpassing all other causes combined (CDC, 2023). Rising pediatric overdose rates and trauma-related hemorrhage deaths further underscore the need for early intervention and community education.

## Methodology

Members of the Interest Group defined roles and contributed their expertise during structured monthly meetings.

Students analyzed TED Talks and current literature to strengthen understanding of pediatric harm reduction strategies.

Experts including Audrey Jean-Guillaume and Dr. Heidi Schumacher provided insights into real-world harm reduction practices and community-related approaches.

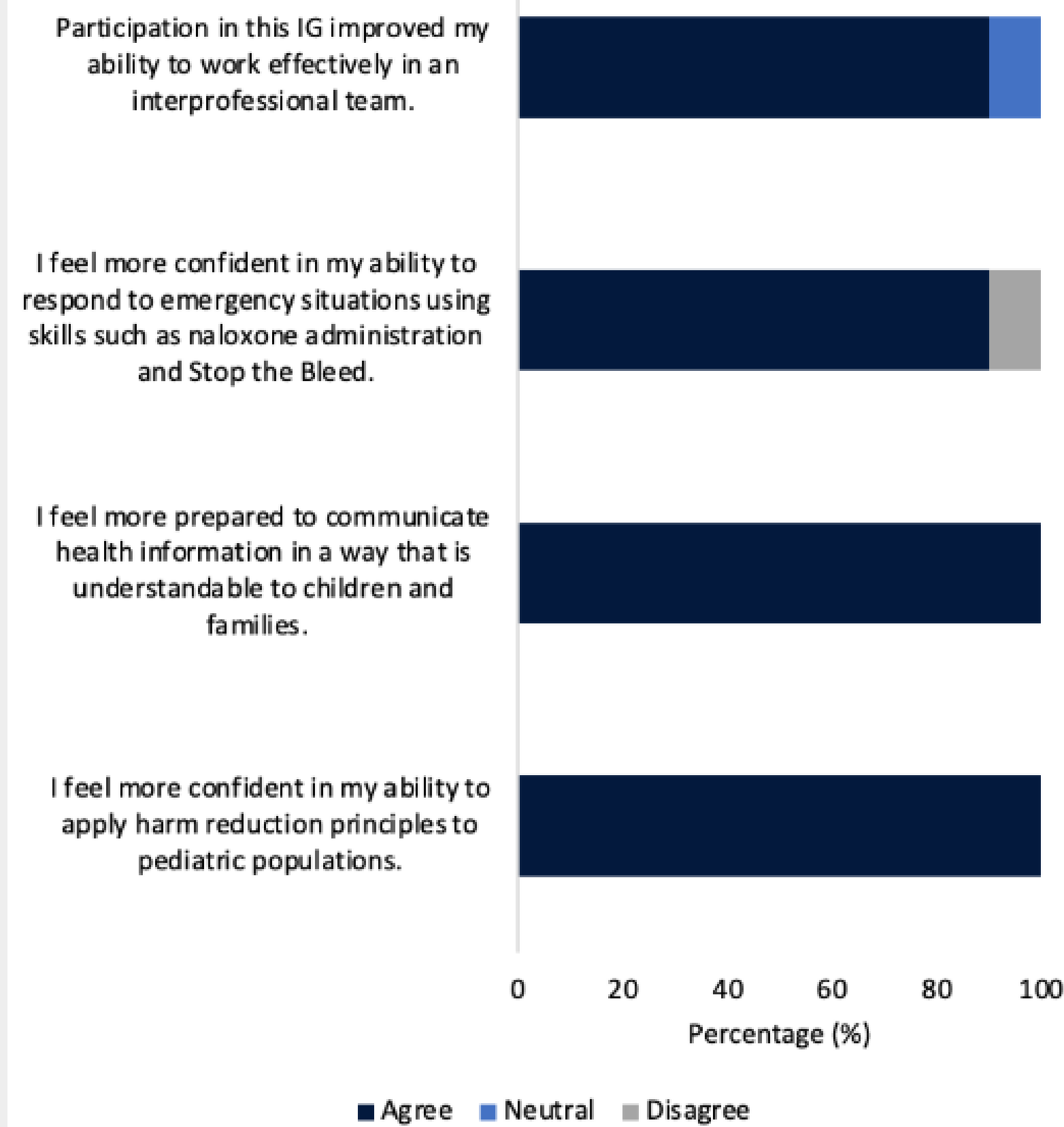
Students developed age-appropriate pamphlets to communicate health promotion and harm reduction concepts to 5th-grade learners.

Members delivered an interactive “Tar Wars” session at Smalley Elementary School to educate students on the risks of vaping and smoking through engaging, hands-on learning.



## Results

### Student Confidence After IG Participation



### Student Takeaways

- "I learned a lot this year from working with an interprofessional group of students to design a brochure aimed to address a health concern for elementary school kids. This taught me how to translate my healthcare knowledge into accessible and easy to read information for public education, which I will need to continue to practice as future healthcare professional."
- "The most valuable activity was Dr. Schumacher's presentation on school attendance. I feel like it connected very well to the theme of harm reduction and made me view attendance in a different light. Healthcare professionals have a responsibility to advocate for students and collaborate with schools to promote attendance. I never considered how attendance should be thought of as a pediatric vital sign and how it could predict health outcomes. The presentation was very engaging and informative."
- "The most valuable learning experience was learning about the importance of ACEs, and how this can be a useful screening tool for physicians to gauge a patient's increased risk for health complications later in life. Engaging with my group members and hearing from their lived experiences was impactful. Working in an interprofessional team has enabled me to understand how we can take a multidisciplinary approach to address complex patients needs."
- "Through this experience, I learned how to translate complex medical information into clear, age-appropriate language that children and their families can truly understand. Practicing this skill showed me how essential communication is to harm reduction, and I will carry it into CLIC and my future clinical practice to build trust, empower patients, and ensure safer health decisions."

## References

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## Conclusions and Future Directions

Participation in the Pediatric Interest Group improved students' confidence and skills in communicating health information to children, applying harm reduction strategies, responding to emergencies, and collaborating across professions. Hands-on activities, simulations, and guest speaker sessions connected theory to practice and prepared students to apply these skills in clinical and community settings. Future efforts will expand school outreach, enhance emergency training, and continue fostering interprofessional teamwork to support safe, patient-centered care for pediatric populations.

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