

GREAT LAKES RECOVERY CENTERS

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Eastern U.P. Agencies Join Students and Community Partners at LSSU for Harm Reduction Day Panel

Multi-Sector Discussion Highlights Local Resources, Lived Experience, and the Urgent Case for Accessible Harm Reduction Services in the EUP



The GLRC harm reduction resource table at the LSSU Library, featuring naloxone, fentanyl test strips, safe use supplies, and educational materials. Signs on the table read: "Harm Reduction Comes in Many Shapes, Sizes, & Forms!"

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — Great Lakes Recovery Centers (GLRC) was proud to participate in Harm Reduction Day at Lake Superior State University, joining students, community partners, and local professionals for an afternoon of resource sharing, honest dialogue, and advocacy for accessible services across the Eastern Upper Peninsula.

The event was hosted at the LSSU Library and sponsored by the university's chapter of Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP). The gathering brought together several EUP-based agencies to staff resource tables and connect attendees with local harm reduction services — putting into practice the event's core message that harm reduction comes in many shapes, sizes, and forms.

A Resource Table Rooted in Community

The GLRC table featured a wide range of harm reduction supplies available to attendees at no cost, including naloxone (Narcan) nasal spray, fentanyl and xylazine test strips, sterile supplies, face masks, gloves, a sharps disposal container, and educational pamphlets on overdose response, local services, and recovery pathways. Printed materials and resource guides were also available.

The table display was intentionally designed to illustrate the breadth of harm reduction as a concept — from smoke detectors and hand sanitizer to naloxone kits and test strips — reinforcing that the underlying principle of reducing preventable harm is one that communities already embrace in countless everyday contexts.

The Panel: Past, Present, and Future of Harm Reduction

Following the resource fair, a moderated panel discussion brought together four voices representing distinct and complementary perspectives on harm reduction in Northern Michigan:

- **Josh Doherty**, Community Health Worker and Peer Recovery Coach, Great Lakes Recovery Centers
- **Lt. Stephannie M. Vallier**, Jail Administrator, Mackinac County Jail
- **Margaret Smith, RN**, Head of Outreach and Harm Reduction Programs, Chippewa County Health Department
- **Sabrina Nevue**, Outreach Worker, Chippewa County Face Addiction Now

The panel addressed questions spanning lived experience and recovery, barriers to accessing services, the role of law enforcement in harm reduction, local overdose trends, and what meaningful progress in the region looks like beyond a single data point. The discussion was, by all accounts, candid — and reflected both the urgency of the moment and the genuine alignment that is possible between public health, law enforcement, and community-based care when the goal is saving lives.

“Harm reduction isn’t a radical idea — it’s what we already do every time we put on a seatbelt or install a smoke detector. The conversation we’re having today is about extending that same basic logic to the people in our community who need it most.”

— Josh Doherty, Community Health Worker / Peer Recovery Coach, GLRC

Notably, the panel reflected the full arc of harm reduction work in the United States — from community-level outreach and peer support to clinical services and law enforcement partnerships — and demonstrated that the Eastern Upper Peninsula has individuals and organizations across all of those sectors actively engaged in the work.

About the Event Partners

Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP) is an international nonprofit organization of students who believe in reforming drug policy through campus organizing, public education, and peer-to-peer advocacy. The LSSU chapter organized Harm Reduction Day as part of its mission to reduce the harms of both drug use and drug prohibition in its campus community and beyond.

Chippewa County Face Addiction Now and the Chippewa County Health Department’s outreach program were among the agencies providing direct resources and expertise at the event, alongside GLRC and other EUP partners.

About Great Lakes Recovery Centers

Great Lakes Recovery Centers is a behavioral health organization serving Northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, with a focus on substance use disorder treatment, peer recovery support, and community health. GLRC is committed to meeting people where they are and removing barriers to care across the continuum of recovery — from harm reduction to long-term treatment and beyond.

For more information about GLRC's services, including Community Health Workers and Peer Recovery Coaches operating in Chippewa County, visit glrc.org.

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