



## Drugs and Society: U.S. Public Policy

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There are two main approaches to reforming drug policy, which reflect differing American values. One is the public health or harm reduction or cost/benefit approach, which implements the American value of pragmatism. This approach looks at the social science and bio-medical evidence regarding the effects of each drug, attempts to weigh the positive and negative consequences of various courses of action, and proposes policies with the best overall mix of outcomes. Public health approaches to drug policy reform emphasize harm reduction (e.g., preventing the spread of disease, maintaining the health of drug users, and guaranteeing drug purity) and controlling in various ways the quantities available for individual purchase, dosage levels, and other aspects of drugs and their use, as well as drug advertising. The other approach to drug policy reform--the libertarian or rights based-approach to legalizing drugs--can be seen to implement the American value of individualism. This approach views the private behavior of adults as none of the government's business, and aims at maximizing individual freedom. *Drugs and Society* explains these differing views by American society in great detail, and will offer the reader all the information needed to create an alternative drug policy.

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