

One possible way to structure the affirmative case for a proposition of comparative policy is to adapt the need-plan-benefits structure. Keeping in mind the resolution at hand, the affirmative may start by arguing that addressing drug abuse should be a high priority. The debaters may then present a plan of harms reduction and its benefits. Although this strategy is possible, the affirmative needs to remember that the main emphasis should be on comparing the two policies. Thus, after presenting the need-plan-benefits case, the affirmative would have to compare the benefits/advantages of the harms reduction policy to the disadvantages of the law enforcement strategy proposed by the negative.

Many avenues are available to structure a case on a comparative policy proposition; in this section we focus on a comparative advantage structure. The comparative advantage analysis may be the most straightforward because the proposition requires debaters to evaluate the advantages of one policy compared with those of another. To make these ideas more concrete, we now turn to a more detailed discussion of constructing an actual case for such a proposition. Constructing a case for the proposition “It is better to focus on a harms reduction strategy than the law enforcement strategy in fighting drug abuse,” or any other kind of comparative policy proposition, can be conceived of in three phases: conceptualizing the case, creating the plan, and creating the advantages.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE CASE

One way to conceptualize the case for comparing two policies is to ask a series of questions that assess and help critically define the competing policies. In conceptualizing the case, debaters must first think about the ideas and concepts that will guide its construction. After thinking about the case conceptually, they can then do research and eventually write a more concrete case, ultimately developing a persuasive speech that supports their case. The questions below should help debaters identify the main differences between the two policies as well as potential similarities and lead the team into constructing the points of comparison:

- 1. What are the central features of both policy options?** Consider the topic that suggests that a harms reduction strategy is superior to a law enforcement strategy for addressing drug abuse. This question urges both teams to critically examine the definitions of harms reduction and law enforcement. After some research, debaters may conclude that criminalization is central to law enforcement while socialization is central to harms reduction. Because the law enforcement strategy can only work when drug users are identified as criminals who violate laws that police enforce, it could be argued that criminalization is inherent to the law enforcement strategy. Alternatively, it could be argued that a harms reduction strategy is one that conceives of drug users as part of society—not as criminals. With this concept, the aim would then be to try to keep that part of society safe from harm rather than put them in prison.
- 2. How do features of these policy options interact with one another?** Arguably, the process of criminalization is incompatible with the process of socialization. First, these policies are incompatible with each