







Stigma Information Sheet

Definition		<p>Stigma are negative attitudes or discrimination against individuals or groups based on a particular characteristic, associated with substance use disorders (SUDs) as well as other physical, mental and behavioral health conditions.</p>
Prevention		<p>STIGMA IS PREVENTABLE!!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use language that puts the “person” before the condition or experience. Give value to the worth of the person • How we refer to people with substance-related conditions may inadvertently elicit and perpetuate stigmatizing attitudes • Stigmatizing language impacts investment and availability of recovery supports, access, and willingness to participate in recovery • Describing Substance Use Disorder (SUD) as treatable helps
Understanding		<p>Stigma can be practiced by individuals, organizations and agencies, communities and society. Prevention practitioners are in a unique position to reduce the stigma surrounding substance misuse and mental illness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally through messaging • Informally in conversations with colleagues and stakeholders • Often work across the continuum of care • They have opportunities to influence professional in various settings including mental health, human services, and public health.
Recognizing		<p>Recognizing Stigma and taking action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ pro-health messaging and use person-first language • Conduct a language audit • Support and enhance individual coping strategies • Provide information and support • Shape public views on substance use disorders • Engage community stakeholders in discussions • Change laws and policies that contribute to stigma



Stigma Reducing Strategies

Individual Level Strategies

- Use “person first” language – refer to people having a problem which can be addressed, rather than the person as the problem
- Be aware of the influence of trauma and unintentional bias



Public Level Strategies

- Engage community stakeholders in outreach efforts and developing messages
- Convey the potential for a range of positive changes and pathways to recovery

Organizational Level Strategies

- Identify the intended audience, and how to use language when communicating with this group
- Correct negative attitudes held by colleagues, coworkers, and potential allies
- Leverage the potential opportunities I have in my prevention role to dispel myths about addiction
- Prioritize maximizing connection, worth, inclusion, and community membership
- Provide information and support
- Update laws and policies that promote anti-stigma approach

Sample Resources

[Addictionary® \(recoveryanswers.org\)](https://www.recoveryanswers.org/addictionary/) This is an online dictionary of addiction-related terms to help the general public and health care professionals “modify their language about addiction.”

[Words Matter: How Language Choice Can Reduce Stigma](#) This resource provides an overview of language and outlines strategies to assess and develop stigma-free messages that “are positive, productive, and inclusive.”

[Stigma Resources from the TTC Networks \(June 2022\)](#) This list of resources from the Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network, Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network, and Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network.

[Engaging People Who Use Drugs in Prevention Efforts: Strategies for Reducing Stigma](#) This tool explores actions practitioners can take to reduce stigma toward members of the drug-using community in order to better engage them as partners in prevention efforts.

The use of affirming language inspires hope.
LANGUAGE MATTERS.

Words have power.

PEOPLE FIRST.

The PTTC Network uses affirming language to promote the application of evidence-based and culturally informed practices.