



Why Do Words Matter?

Studies show that only 1 in 10 people with substance use disorder receives treatment. Stigma is a key barrier. Using language that puts the person first reduces stigma by helping people with substance use disorder get the treatment they need and promotes patient-centered care from the healthcare team

We can help stop stigma associated with substance use disorder by using person-first, medically accurate language in our everyday interactions. Using non-stigmatizing terminology recognizes substance use disorder as a chronic disease that can be effectively treated.

SAY THIS...

- Person with a substance use disorder or addiction
- Person who uses drugs
- Person with unhealthy alcohol use
- Person's name

- Person in remission or recovery

- Medication for addiction treatment (MAT)
- Medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD)
- Opioid agonist therapy (OAT)
- Medication for a substance use disorder
- Treatment

- Risky or unhealthy alcohol use
- Using other than prescribed
- Use of non-prescribed or illicit substances

For Toxicology Results
Positive test or unexpected result

Non-test Related
Person who uses drugs

- Baby born with Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal or Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
- Newborn exposed to substances

NOT THIS...

Addict, User, Drug Abuser, Junkie, Crackhead, Tweaker, Pill-popper, Alcoholic, Drunk

Sober
Clean

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)
Replacement Therapy
Substitution Therapy

Abuse
Misuse

Dirty

Addicted baby
Crack baby

I PLEDGE TO STOP STIGMA

We invite you to sign the Words Matter Pledge, originally developed by the Grayken Center for Addiction at Boston Medical Center, to help us reach our goal of creating a stigma-free environment in our communities.

I believe that the words I use when talking about substance use disorder are important in reducing stigma.

I pledge to treat all people with a substance use disorder with dignity & respect.

I pledge to talk about addiction as a chronic illness, not a moral failing.

I pledge to be a leader in reducing stigma and promoting recovery.

Full name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____