

Speaking Up about Stigma

**Our words matter.
Because people
matter.**

Using negative, judgmental language to describe behavioral health, which includes Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health, can cause disgrace or stigma and creates a barrier to getting help. Behavioral health conditions are treatable medical conditions. Persons with any medical condition are worthy of help and respect.

We encourage everyone in our communities to use language that acknowledges the medical nature of Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health. To do so offers everyone the dignity they deserve.

SAY THIS:	INSTEAD OF THIS:
Substance Use Disorder	Drug or alcohol addiction
Person with a Substance Use Disorder	Addict, junkie, druggie
Person living in recovery	Ex-addict
Person living with an addiction	Battling or suffering from an addiction
Person arrested for drug violation	Drug offender
Drug use	Drug abuse
Medication is a treatment tool	Medication is a crutch
Had a setback	Relapsed
Chooses not to at this point	Non-compliant, resistant
Experiencing a mental health crisis	Crazy
Maintained recovery	Stayed clean
Positive drug screen	Dirty drug screen
Having thoughts of self-harm or suicide	Suicidal