




TOOLS TO HELP REDUCE STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE RELATED TO SUBSTANCE USE

FPT SUBSTANCE USE STIGMA REDUCTION WORKING GROUP

Overcoming Stigma Through Language

A Primer

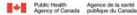






COMMUNICATING ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE IN COMPASSIONATE, SAFE AND NON-STIGMATIZING WAYS

A Resource for Canadian Health Professional Organizations and their Membership

PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING CANADIANS TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH

STIGMA

WHY WORDS MATTER

ABOUT STIGMA

Stigma is negative attitudes, beliefs or behaviours about or towards a group of people because of their situation in life. It includes discrimination, prejudice, judgment and stereotypes, which can isolate people who use drugs.

Stigma matters

People who use drugs, especially those struggling with addiction face discrimination and barriers to getting help.

Stigma can:


- lead a person to avoid getting help because they are afraid of judgement or getting in trouble with work, their loved ones or even the law
- leave a person to hide their drug use or use drugs alone
- affect a person's ability to find housing and jobs, which affects their health and quality of life
- contribute to people who use drugs receiving a lower quality of care from the healthcare system when they access services.

Changing how you talk about drug use

The language you use has a direct and deep impact on people around you. You can reduce stigma by changing the words you use to talk about drug use. Using kind words can make it easier for someone to speak up, to feel understood or to receive help.

- Use person-first language, for example say 'person who uses drugs' instead of 'drug user'
- Use neutral, medically accurate words when describing drug use.

Topic	Instead of	Use
People who use drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addicts, junkies, users, drug abusers, recreational drug users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who use drugs People with a substance use disorder or addiction People with longstanding experience People who occasionally use drugs
People who have used drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former drug addict, referring to a person as being 'sober' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who have used drugs People in recovery People with lived/living experience
Drug use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance/drug abuse Substance/drug misuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance/drug use Substance use disorder/addiction Medically drug use Drug dependence



STIGMA IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO TREATMENT AND RECOVERY FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS TODAY. OFTEN THE LANGUAGE WE USE CONTRIBUTES TO STIGMA.

THERE ARE A LOT OF STIGMATIZING WORDS THAT ARE COMMON IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY LANGUAGE.

WHAT YOU SAY	VS	WHAT PEOPLE HEAR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABUSER DRUG HABIT ADDICT DRUG USER 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT'S MY FAULT IT'S MY CHOICE THERE'S NO HOPE I'M A CRIMINAL


BY CHOOSING ALTERNATE LANGUAGE, YOU CAN HELP BREAK DOWN THE NEGATIVE STEREOTYPE ASSOCIATED WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER.

INSTEAD OF	TRY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABUSER, ADDICT DRUG HABIT FORMER/REFORMED ADDICT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PERSON WITH A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER REGULAR SUBSTANCE USE, SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER PERSON IN RECOVERY/LONG-TERM RECOVERY

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK. HELP REMOVE THE STIGMA.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

#WORDSMATTER



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Language matters...



4 guidelines to using non-stigmatizing language

- Use People-first language**
 - Person who uses opioids VS. Opioid user OR Addict
- Use language that reflects the medical nature of substance use disorders**
 - Person experiencing problems with substance use VS. Abuser OR Junkie
- Use language that promotes recovery**
 - Person experiencing barriers to accessing services VS. Unmotivated OR Non-compliant
- Avoid slang and idioms**
 - Positive test results OR Negative test results VS. Dirty test results OR Clean test results

VISIT towardtheheart.com FOR MORE INFORMATION

CREATED BY BCCDC HARM REDUCTION TEAM
Adapted from Broyles et al., *Combating Ineffective Stigma and Prevalent Language in Addiction Screening, Assessment and Treatment: Substance Abuse 2014*

Last Updated: December 6th 2017

BACKGROUND

- Reducing substance use stigma is one of the five priorities of the FPT PSUH Committee.
- “Creating a lexicon of stigmatizing language” was an early deliverable for the FPT Substance Use Stigma Working Group.
- As many tools exist, the FPT Stigma WG has compiled a collection of lexicons that FPT governments can use to identify, change and avoid stigmatizing language in reports, communications, etc.. These lexicons can also be shared with stakeholders and partner organizations.
- This presentation is meant to give a snap shot of these tools with links to the tools themselves. We will also be sending an email with these links for you to more easily share with colleagues.

WHY LANGUAGE MATTERS

- The majority of overdose deaths occur at home alone and stigma plays a significant role.
- Widespread stigma causes many to hide their substance use and to avoid or leave treatment due to fear of judgment. Many also report discrimination within health and social systems.
- Negative public perception of drug use can also impact support for and success of evidence-based policies and programs put in place by government and civil society organizations to curb overdose deaths.
- Addiction is not a choice but stigmatizing language like “drug abuse” places blame
- CHANGING the way we communicate about substance is an important start. It can help shift the public mindset.. with a ripple effect to reframe addiction as the complex but treatable medical condition it is.

“Shifting language to more accurately reflect the nature of the health condition can lead to wider support of life-saving interventions.” CCSA/CAPSA language primer

OVERVIEW OF LEXICONS

#	Title	Published By	Intended Audience
1	Stigma: Why Words Matter	Health Canada	General Population
2	Overcoming Stigma Through Language	Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) and the Community Addictions Peer Support Association (CAPSA)	General Population, Friends and family of those who use substances
3	Changing the Language of Addiction Fact Sheet	CCSA	General Population
4	When it Comes to Substance Use Disorders Words Matter	CCSA	General Population
5	Communicating about substance use in compassionate, safe, and non-stigmatizing ways	Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)	Healthcare Professionals, Healthcare Professional Organizations and their membership, Organizations looking for detailed lexicon to change stigmatizing language
6	A Primer to Reduce Substance Use Stigma in the Canadian Health System	PHAC	Healthcare Professionals Healthcare Professional Organizations and their membership
7	Language Matters Using Respectful language in relation to sexual health, substance use, STBBIs and intersecting sources of stigma	Canadian Public Health Association	General Population Healthcare Professionals
8	Language Matters Poster	British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)	General Population
9	Respectful Language and Stigma	BCCDC	Healthcare Workers, Media

1. CHANGING HOW WE TALK ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE - HC

- Link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/stigma-why-words-matter-fact-sheet.html>
- From: Health Canada
- Key takeaways:
 - Changing our language around substance use can reduce stigma
 - Two key principles to stigma reducing language
 - Examples of ways people can change their language
- Intended audience:
 - General population
- Suggested use:
 - Share online (via email or social media)
 - Promote sharing of printed hard copies (i.e. on campuses, in workplaces, in doctors offices & medical clinics)

STIGMA WHY WORDS MATTER

ABOUT STIGMA

Stigma is negative attitudes, beliefs or behaviours about or towards a group of people because of their situation in life. It includes discrimination, prejudice, judgment and stereotypes, which can isolate people who use drugs.

Stigma matters

People who use drugs, especially those struggling with addiction face discrimination and barriers to getting help.

Stigma can:

- lead a person to avoid getting help because they are afraid of judgement or getting in trouble with work, their loved ones or even the law
- cause a person to hide their drug use or use drugs alone
- affect a person's ability to find housing and jobs, which affects their health and quality of life
- contribute to people who use drugs receiving a lower quality of care from the healthcare system when they access services

Changing how you talk about drug use

The language you use has a direct and deep impact on people around you. You can reduce stigma by changing the words you use to talk about drug use. Using kind words can make it easier for someone to speak up, to feel understood or to receive help.

- Use person-first language, for example say 'person who uses drugs' instead of 'drug user'
- Use neutral, medically accurate words when describing drug use.

Topic	Instead of	Use
People who use drugs	• Addicts, junkies, users, drug abusers, recreational drug users	• People who use drugs • People with a substance use disorder or addiction • People with lived/living experience • People who occasionally use drugs
People who have used drugs	• Former drug addict, referring to a person as being 'clean'	• People who have used drugs • People in recovery • People with lived/living experience
Drug use	• Substance/drug abuse • Substance/drug misuse	• Substance/drug use • Substance use disorder/addiction • Problematic drug use • Drug dependence

Health Canada Santé Canada

2. OVERCOMING STIGMA THROUGH LANGUAGE A PRIMER – CCSA AND CAPSA

Overcoming Stigma Through Language

A Primer

What is stigma?

Stigma is any attitude, belief or behaviour that discriminates against people.

When it comes to substance use, stigma impacts people with lived and living experience, as well as their families.

Stigma often emerges in the form of derogatory language that shames and belittles people. Such language can lead to a cycle of behaviours and attitudes that isolate and marginalize people who use substances.

STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE

Stigmatizing language and disrespectful behaviour affect the way people see themselves and how they are treated by society as a whole. It is important to remember that a substance use disorder should be treated as a medical condition. Shifting language to more accurately reflect the nature of the health condition can lead to wider support of life-saving interventions.⁴

Some people internalize the stigma surrounding substance use, causing them to feel ashamed and to struggle with feelings of worthlessness. Other people's negative attitudes towards them can amplify and further reinforce these feelings.

International studies by the World Health Organization show hazardous alcohol and drug use disorders are among the most stigmatized conditions.⁵



Help end stigma surrounding people who use substances by using person-first language in your day-to-day life.

Talk with your friends, family and colleagues about how they can help too by starting conversations at the dinner table or bus stop, or by encouraging a workplace to introduce a person-first language policy.

Join the conversation online with the hashtag **#StigmaEndsWithMe**.

Tell friends on Facebook and Twitter that stigma around substance use hurts, and we can help change this in the words we choose to use and the attitudes we hold.



Over half of Canadians suffering from substance use disorders say that stigma is a major barrier to their well-being. We can help break down these barriers by changing the words we choose to use.

#StigmaEndsWithMe



The words we use help shape other people's experiences. Let's create the reality we want by choosing words related to substance use that are compassionate and respect people's dignity.

#StigmaEndsWithMe



Substance use disorders aren't a choice, they are a health condition. Take the first step to ending stigma by eliminating biased words from your day-to-day life.

#StigmaEndsWithMe

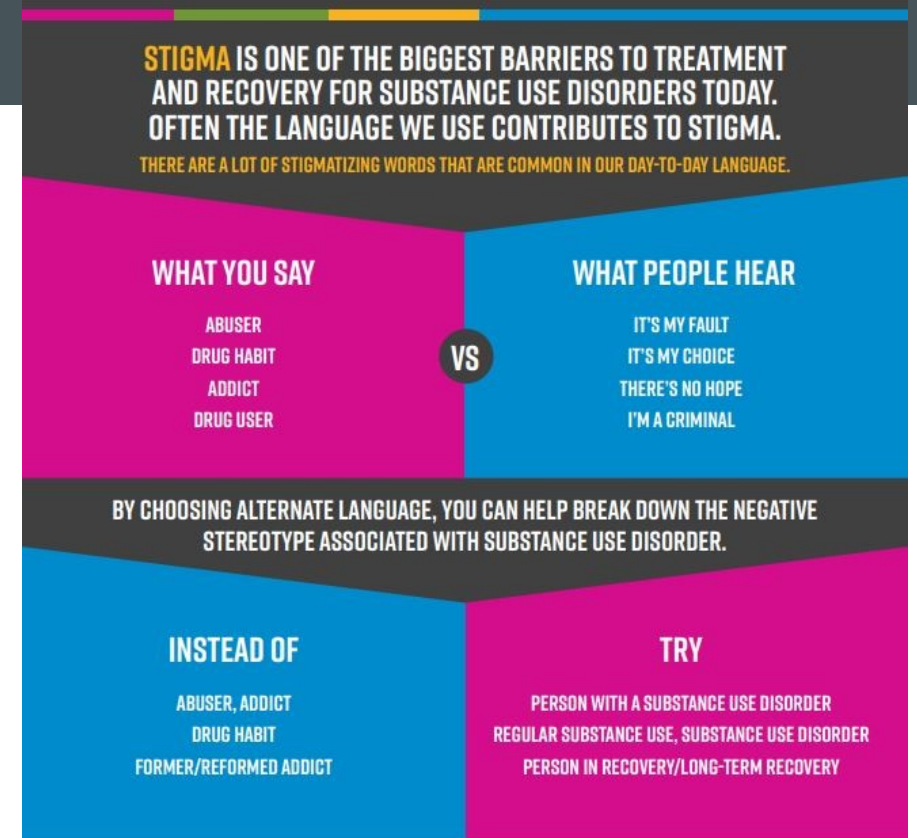


2. OVERCOMING STIGMA THROUGH LANGUAGE A PRIMER - CCSA

- Link: <https://www.ccsa.ca/overcoming-stigma-through-language-primer>
- From: Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addiction and the Community Addictions Peer Support Association
- Key takeaways:
 - What is substance use
 - What is stigma
 - How you can change your language around stigma
 - How you can speak out about stigma
- Intended audience:
 - General population
 - Friends and family of those who use substances
- Suggested use:
 - Fantastic knowledge translation piece for all audiences
 - Great format to share/promote internally/externally and via government social media (including using the hashtag #StigmaEndsWithMe)

3. CHANGING THE LANGUAGE OF ADDICTION FACT SHEET - CCSA

- Link: <https://www.ccsa.ca/changing-language-addiction-fact-sheet>
- From: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction
- Key takeaways:
 - Stigma is one of the greatest barriers to substance use treatment and recovery
 - Examples of what substance users hear when stigmatizing language is used
 - Examples of ways people can change the language they use
- Intended audience:
 - General population
- Suggested use:
 - Share online (i.e. via email or social media)
 - Share hard copies (i.e. on campuses, in workplaces, in doctors offices & medical clinics)



THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK. HELP REMOVE THE STIGMA.

JOIN THE **CONVERSATION**

#WORDSMATTER



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4. WHEN IT COMES TO SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER WORDS MATTER - CCSA

- Link: <https://www.ccsa.ca/when-it-comes-substance-use-disorders-words-matter-infographic>
- From: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction
- Key takeaways:
 - Words matter when it comes to substance use
 - Addiction is not a choice
- Intended audience:
 - General population
- Suggested use:
 - Would share with other lexicons such as Changing the Language of Addiction or Changing the Way we Talk About Substance Use)
 - Share hard copies (i.e. on campuses, in workplaces, in doctors offices & medical clinics)
 - Share online (i.e. via email or social media)

WHEN IT COMES TO SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS **WORDS MATTER.**



1 IN 10 CANADIANS, FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, ARE STRUGGLING WITH PROBLEMATIC SUBSTANCE USE TODAY.*



83% EXPERIENCED BARRIERS TO RECOVERY.*

STIGMA IS A MAJOR BARRIER TO SEEKING HELP AND TO SUSTAINING RECOVERY. THE WORDS WE USE OFTEN CONTRIBUTE TO THIS STIGMA.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IS A **HEALTH CONDITION** AND SHOULD BE TREATED LIKE ONE.

IT IS NOT A CHOICE.

BUT IT CAN BE TREATED SUCCESSFULLY, PARTICULARLY WHEN WE MOVE FROM STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE TO WORDS THAT SHOW UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSION

WORDS MATTER. USE THEM WISELY.

JOIN THE **CONVERSATION**

#WORDSMATTER



 Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction

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* CCSA: LIFE IN RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION IN CANADA, MAY 2017

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5. COMMUNICATING ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE IN COMPASSIONATE, SAFE, AND NON-STIGMATIZING WAYS - PHAC



KEY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These guiding principles can help individuals and organizations in communicating about substance use in a more compassionate, non-stigmatizing way.

1. Take some time to "check yourself" (the basics).
 - Be self-reflective and aware of one's personal biases when communicating about substance use.
 - Avoid slang, derogatory and discriminatory terms, recognizing that many are commonly used yet inappropriate and/or harmful.
 - Champion safe, compassionate language without policing oneself and others on language choices. Be forgiving and patient, recognizing that stigmatizing language is often used habitually (versus deliberately) and can take time and practice to change.
2. Recognize that individuals who use substances are human beings with unique and complex identities and life experiences.
 - Use people-first language that focuses on individuals first rather than a specific health condition or behaviour (e.g., "people who uses drugs" versus "drug users"). Labels meant to capture real or assumed health conditions or behaviours (e.g., "addict") do not allow space for the other identities that a person who uses substances may hold, and imply that their only identity is related to their substance use (i.e., they are just a person who uses substances). Labelling individuals by a health condition or behaviour first also implies a false level of homogeneity within a group (e.g., "all addicts are the same") and that these labels are a fixed part of a person's identity.
 - Use language and tone that expresses care and compassion, rather than judgement and discrimination about substance use. This includes not making assumptions about a person's character or situation (past, present or future), demonstrating empathy and considering the complexity of individuals' life experiences.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE IN COMPASSIONATE, SAFE AND NON-STIGMATIZING WAYS

A Resource for Canadian Health Professional Organizations and their Membership

PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING CANADIANS TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH

TOPIC	AVOID THESE STIGMATIZING TERMS	ALTERNATIVE NON-STIGMATIZING TERMS	BACKGROUND/RATIONALE
People Who Have Used Substances	- former drug addicts	- people with lived experience of substance use [disorder]	
	- ex-addicts	- people who have used substances	
		- people who formerly used substances	
		- people who have a history of substance use	
	- recovering addicts	- people in recovery [from a substance use disorder]	- Being in recovery from a substance use disorder can, but does not have to mean, abstinence from substances.
	- former alcoholics	- people with lived experience of alcohol use disorder	
	- [reference to a person being] clean		

5. COMMUNICATING ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE IN COMPASSIONATE, SAFE, AND NON-STIGMATIZING WAYS - PHAC

- Link to lexicon: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/communicating-about-substance-use-compassionate-safe-non-stigmatizing-ways-2019.html>
- From: Public Health Agency of Canada
- Key takeaways:
 - 6 guiding principles to help with communicating about substance use in compassionate and non-stigmatizing ways, along with comprehensive lexicon.
- Intended audience:
 - Healthcare Professionals
 - Healthcare Professional Organizations & their membership
 - Any organization looking for more detailed lexicon to change stigmatizing language
- Suggested use:
 - Lexicon is detailed and useful when scanning for stigmatizing language in communications/reports etc, therefore sharing with internal comms colleagues would be beneficial
 - Share with healthcare professionals
 - Share online (via email or social media)

6. A PRIMER TO REDUCE SUBSTANCE USE STIGMA IN THE CANADIAN HEALTH SYSTEM - PHAC

A PRIMER TO REDUCE SUBSTANCE USE STIGMA IN THE CANADIAN HEALTH SYSTEM



PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING CANADIANS TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH

IMPACT ON SOCIAL AND HEALTH INEQUITIES

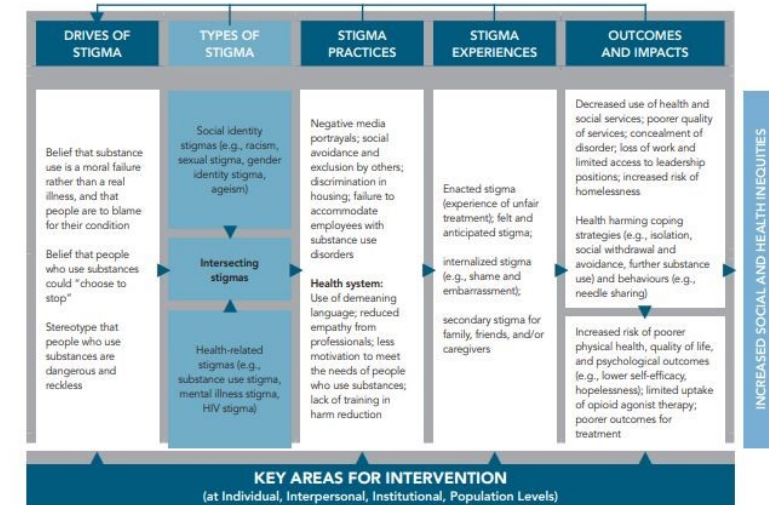
Beyond these negative impacts on individual-level outcomes, stigma contributes to population-level social and health inequities. Some populations (e.g., Indigenous peoples, people experiencing homelessness, poverty and/or unemployment, etc.) are disproportionately affected by substance-related harms (Feng et al., 2013; Buchanan, 2006). These harms (and others) are exacerbated when systems are not set up to meet the needs of these groups, as reflected in varied system-level barriers to services and opportunity (e.g., restricted hours of operation, failure to account for linguistic or literacy differences, requirements of proof of address, cost, etc.). These barriers are expressions of systemic stigma that extend beyond substance use stigma, and limit the accessibility of housing, employment, social support networks, income and social and health services. As a result, systemic stigma can create and widen inequities among people who use substances and members of other groups that have experienced stigma and marginalization. The dynamic links between social and health inequities, stigma and substance use are shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: The dynamic relationships between substance use, stigma and social and health inequities.



For a detailed illustration of how substance use stigma undermines the health of individuals and contributes to health inequities, see the Stigma Pathways to Health Outcomes Model (Annex 1).

ANNEX—SUBSTANCE USE STIGMA PATHWAYS TO HEALTH OUTCOMES MODEL¹



The above model is an adaptation of the Stigma Pathways to Health Outcomes Model, which can be found in the CPHO Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2019: Addressing Stigma — Towards an Inclusive Health System. The model above highlights examples of substance use stigma pathways. For a detailed model and references, please see CPHO report.

6. A PRIMER TO REDUCE SUBSTANCE USE STIGMA IN THE CANADIAN HEALTH SYSTEM - PHAC

- Link to Primer: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/primer-reduce-substance-use-stigma-health-system.html>
- From: Public Health Agency of Canada
- Key takeaways:
 - Substance use stigma is prevalent throughout the health system and contributes to poorer quality of care and negative health outcomes
 - Creating a stigma-free health system will require collaborative action and sustained commitment of key players across the health system.
 - Efforts to reduce substance use stigma within the health system must also acknowledge and address intersecting stigmas, including through initiatives not traditionally labelled as “anti-stigma interventions
- Intended audience:
 - Healthcare Professionals
 - Healthcare Professional Organizations & their membership
- Suggested use:
 - Support health professionals and other stakeholders to advocate within their professional communities
 - To demonstrate the need for system level change within the health system to mitigate substance use and wellbeing of patients
 - Direct health system leaders and decision makers to evidence informed interventions that can help reduce substance use stigma within the system
 - **Note: this primer is not an implementation guide. Although the “communicating about substance use” tool on slide 8-9 can be a stand along tool, it should be included when sharing this guide.**

7. LANGUAGE MATTERS USING RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE IN RELATION TO SEXUAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE, STBBIS AND INTERSECTING SOURCES OF STIGMA

2019

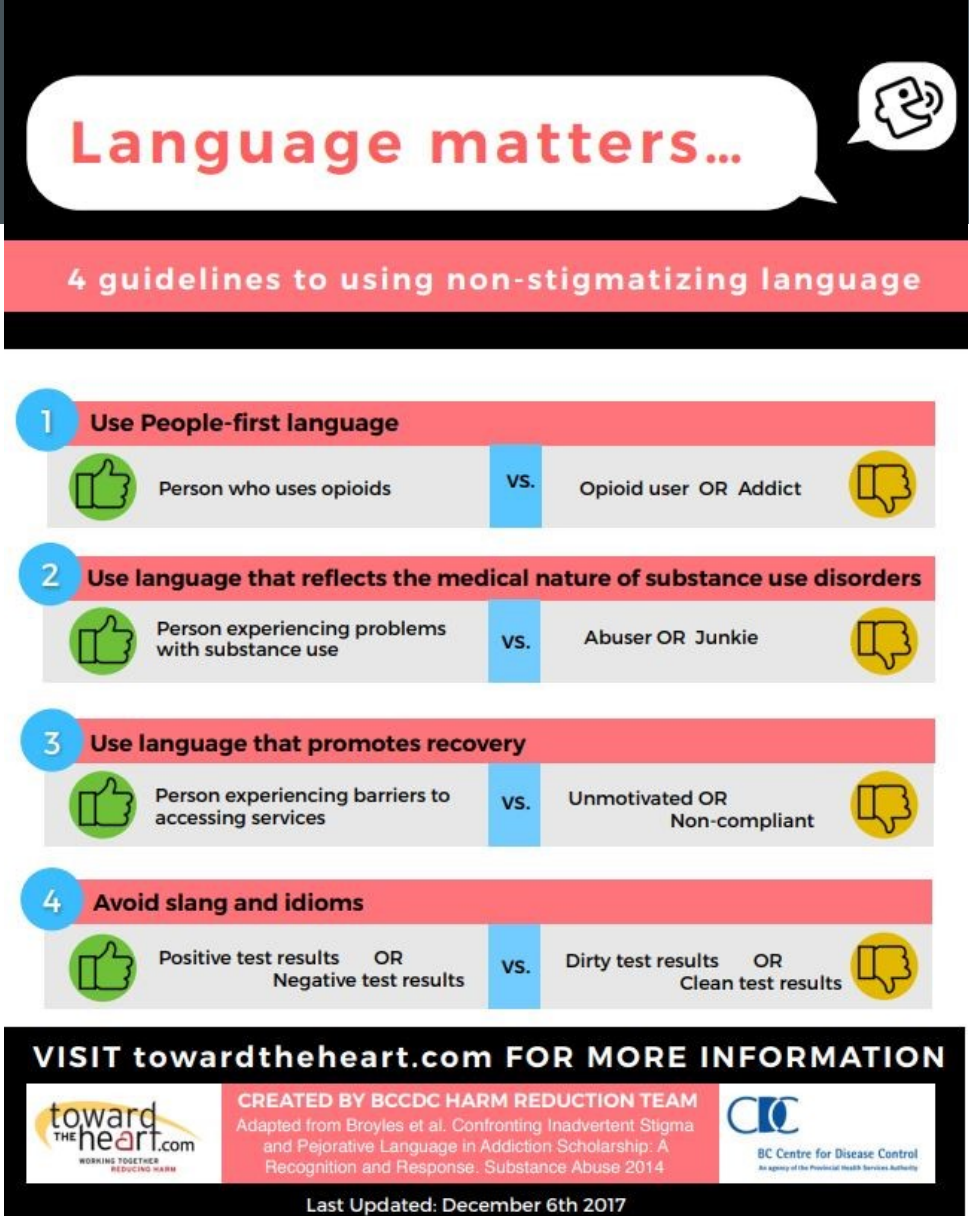
LANGUAGE MATTERS

Using respectful language in relation to sexual health, substance use, STBBIs and intersecting sources of stigma

- **Link:** <https://www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/resources/stbbi/language-tool-e.pdf>
- **From:** Canadian Public Health Association
- **Key takeaways:**
 - Guidance for using non-stigmatizing language in relation to sexual health, substance use, STBBIs, and intersection sources of stigma
- **Intended audience:**
 - General population
 - Healthcare professionals
- **Suggested use:**
 - Share hard copies (i.e. on campuses, in workplaces, in doctors offices & medical clinics)
 - Share online (i.e. via email or social media)

8. LANGUAGE MATTERS POSTER - BC

- Link: <https://towardtheheart.com/update/language-matters>
- From: British Columbia CDC
- Key takeaways:
 - 4 guidelines for using non-stigmatizing language
- Intended audience:
 - General population
- Suggested use:
 - Share hard copies (i.e. on campuses, in workplaces, in doctors offices & medical clinics)
 - Share online (i.e. via email or social media)



The poster features a dark background with a white speech bubble at the top containing the title 'Language matters...'. Below this is a red banner with the subtitle '4 guidelines to using non-stigmatizing language'. The main content consists of four numbered sections, each with a red header, a green thumbs-up icon for the preferred language, a 'vs.' separator, and a yellow thumbs-down icon for the stigmatizing language. The footer includes the website 'towardtheheart.com', the creator 'BCCDC HARM REDUCTION TEAM', and the BC Centre for Disease Control logo.

Language matters...

4 guidelines to using non-stigmatizing language

- 1 Use People-first language**
Person who uses opioids vs. Opioid user OR Addict
- 2 Use language that reflects the medical nature of substance use disorders**
Person experiencing problems with substance use vs. Abuser OR Junkie
- 3 Use language that promotes recovery**
Person experiencing barriers to accessing services vs. Unmotivated OR Non-compliant
- 4 Avoid slang and idioms**
Positive test results OR Negative test results vs. Dirty test results OR Clean test results

VISIT towardtheheart.com FOR MORE INFORMATION

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WORKING TOGETHER
REDUCING HARM

CREATED BY BCCDC HARM REDUCTION TEAM
Adapted from Broyles et al. Confronting Inadvertent Stigma and Pejorative Language in Addiction Scholarship: A Recognition and Response. Substance Abuse 2014

BC Centre for Disease Control
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Last Updated: December 6th 2017

9. RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE AND STIGMA - BC



RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE AND STIGMA REGARDING PEOPLE WHO USE SUBSTANCES

Background

Healthcare workers and the media can greatly influence the way in which the public perceive people who use drugs (PWUDs). Therefore there is a need to address the language surrounding substance use disorders and drug addiction and those who use drugs. While the stigma around drug use has traditionally served as a deterrent, it is becoming increasingly recognised that the stigmatisation, discrimination and isolation of PWUDs has led to poorer health outcomes and further marginalisation. With the escalating opioid crisis in British Columbia, reframing the way in which we think about and describe PWUDs is a key component in reducing the stigma of drug use, and the subsequent reluctance of PWUDs to accessing healthcare.

What is Stigma?

Stigma is defined as "an attribute or quality which 'significantly discredits' an individual in the eyes of others".¹ In medicine, stigma around a health condition is influenced by two main factors: cause and controllability.² Substance use disorders are more highly stigmatised than other health conditions as society generally considers drug use to be a "choice" and repeated use to be a result of poor "self-control".² This is in contrast to conditions such as cancer, where society often attributes no blame for the cause or controllability of the disease to the patient. The negative attitudes towards drug use are further ingrained in the law where illegal drug use is a criminal offence. Current research in addiction medicine demonstrates that developing a substance use disorder is multifactorial, often with a strong biological component.³ Reframing the language around drug use is essential in changing the perceptions of healthcare workers and the public, as it shifts the focus of drug addiction from being a moral, social or criminal issue to a medical issue, which deserves treatment.

How Does Stigma Influence Health?

The negative consequences of stigmatisation can manifest in several ways. The most obvious of these is enacted stigma, otherwise known as discrimination, in which PWUDs may experience direct negative behaviour towards them, such as difficulty in obtaining employment, reduced access to housing, or poor support for treatment.¹ In a professional setting, enacted stigma is easier to recognise and address. Self-stigma is more subtle and refers to the negative thoughts and feelings (for example, shame, negative self-evaluative thoughts, fear) that develop as a result of identifying with a stigmatised group.¹ Because of this, those who experience self-stigma are less likely to seek employment, find it difficult to develop intimate contacts and are more likely to avoid treatment. The language we use to address PWUDs can have damaging effects; terms such as "drug abuser" and "addict" carry negative connotations. When PWUDs adopt these terms for themselves they are likely to experience self-stigma and "accept" that they cannot recover. Unless

Recommendations for Change

Adapted from Broyles L et al. Confronting Inadvertent Stigma and Pejorative Language in Addiction Scholarship: A Recognition and Response.⁸

Stigma is a social, cultural and moral process, and therefore undoing stigma takes time and a concerted effort from all stakeholders. While it may just seem like semantics, research has shown that language influences cognitive biases, especially around drug use.⁹ To reduce the stigma around drug use, Broyles and colleagues recommend four guidelines on using non-stigmatising language⁸:

1. Use "people-first language"
2. Use language that reflects the medical nature of substance use disorders and treatment
3. Use language that promotes recovery
4. Avoid slang and idioms

9. RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE AND STIGMA - BC

- Link: http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/respectful-language-and-stigma-final_244.pdf
- From: British Columbia CDC
- Key takeaways:
 - Healthcare providers and the media have a responsibility to use appropriate language when talking about substance use
 - It is in everyone's best interest to reduce stigma around substance use
 - We cannot ignore the problem if we are contributing to it
 - Recommendations for change
- Intended audience:
 - Healthcare workers
 - Media
- Suggested use:
 - Share hard copies (i.e. on campuses, in workplaces, in doctors offices & medical clinics)
 - Share online (i.e. emails, news articles, media broadcasts)

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND NEXT STEPS

Key Takeaways

- Many of the lexicons and resources point to similar principles such as “person first language”, “avoidance of slang terms”, and “language that promotes recovery”.
- Different lexicons are available to support different purposes and populations. For example, resources like #4 and #7 are glanceable posters for the general population and others such as resource #6 specifically target healthcare professionals.