

INSTEAD OF:	TRY SAYING:
Addict/abuser	Person with SUD/person living with substance use disorder/person who uses drugs
Alcoholic	Person with alcohol use disorder/person living with alcohol use disorder
Clean/dirty urine (urine testing)	Urine negative for/positive for or substance not detected/detected
Clean (person)	Person in recovery from substance use/person in remission from substance use disorder or addiction
Criminal/felon/ex-con	Person with justice involvement/person with criminal legal system involvement
Drug offender	Person arrested or prosecuted for substances
Fired/terminated	Guided to more appropriate treatment setting
Illicit	Criminalized
Medication assisted treatment (MAT)/opioid replacement therapy	Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) Medication for addiction treatment (MAT)
Nonadherent/noncompliant	Not using as prescribed
Relapse/slip	Resume use/restart use/recurrence of use
Strike/deviation	Concern
Drug abuse	Substance misuse
Reformed addict	Recovering patient

## UNDERSTANDING ADDICTION

Addiction is a complex condition that affects millions of people worldwide. It is not a matter of willpower or moral failing; it is a brain disorder. Addiction changes the brain's structure and how it works in areas related to reward, motivation, and memory. These changes create a strong compulsion to seek and use substances despite harmful consequences.

**People with substance use disorder deserve to access the care they need.**



**NEUROBIOLOGY  
OF ADDICTION  
GUIDE**



**STIGMA REDUCTION  
INITIATIVE**



<https://michigan-open.org/initiatives/stigma-reduction/>

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## STIGMA REDUCTION



[MICHIGAN-OPEN.ORG](https://michigan-open.org)

**OPEN**  
 Prevention. Treatment. Recovery.

# TYPES OF STIGMA

## PUBLIC STIGMA

Ideas and stereotypes about people with substance use disorders.

## HEALTHCARE STIGMA

Views about treatment being ineffective.



## INTERNAL STIGMA

Internalizing and accepting negative beliefs and feelings based on societal stereotypes.

## RECOVERY COMMUNITY STIGMA

Views about medications vs. abstinence.

# HOW TO REDUCE STIGMA

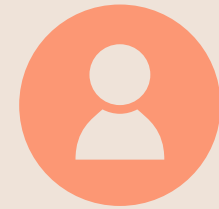
- **Self-Reflection and Awareness:** Explore your own biases.
- **Education and Awareness:** Embrace a harm reduction philosophy.
- **Cultivate Empathy and Compassion:** Listen to lived experiences of people in remission/recovery from SUD using multiple treatment pathways.
- **Use Stigma-Free Language:** Use non-judgmental, person-first language.
- **Advocate for Stigma Reduction:** Avoid lecturing or offering unsolicited advice, and instead, offer understanding and encouragement.
- **Policy and Legal Reform:** Normalize evidence-based medication treatment.
- **Peer Support and Advocacy:** Integrate peer recovery coaches into healthcare systems to harness the power of lived experience, bridging gaps between clinical treatment and real-life application.
- **Media Responsibility:** Call for responsible representation of addiction and recovery in the media.
- **Community Engagement:** Understand and treat addiction as a chronic disease.



# WORDS MATTER

How we talk about substance use can either contribute to or reduce stigma. Saying “substance abuser” can cause people to think substance use is the person’s fault and that they might need punishment compared to saying “substance use disorder” which leads people to think the person needs treatment.

## “SUBSTANCE ABUSER”



- Stigmatizing label
- Negative self-perception
- Reduced empathy

## “PERSON WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER”



- Humanized language
- Medical recognition
- Empathy and support