



# Supporting Recovery:

## REDUCING STIGMA RELATED TO SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

Recovery is a reality in the lives of thousands of individuals & families in North Dakota and yet the stigma of addiction continues to be a barrier for those seeking help. Professionals can help reduce stigma in the following ways:

- 1 Use recovery-oriented language

RECOVERY-ORIENTED	NOT RECOVERY-ORIENTED
Person in active addiction	Addict/alcoholic
Patient	User
Positive drug screen	Dirty drug screen
Individual with chronic brain disease	Frequent flyer

- 2 Review and update program procedures by removing any punitive practices (discharging patients due to drug use, not supporting medication assisted treatments)
- 3 Provide education to patient's family members on the nature of addiction as a chronic brain disease
- 4 Encourage patients and staff to volunteer at an agency within the local community
- 5 Engage in community stakeholder meetings and speak out against the stigmatization of individuals with a behavioral health disorder
- 6 Advocate for patients within the local and state government
- 7 Participate in community recovery events

Kelly, J.F., Westerhoff, C.M. (2010). Does it matter how we refer to individuals with substance-related conditions? A randomized study of two commonly used terms. International Journal of Drug Policy. 21(3):202-7. [www.attcnetwork.org/regcenters/productDocs/2/Anti-Stigma%20Toolkit.pdf](http://www.attcnetwork.org/regcenters/productDocs/2/Anti-Stigma%20Toolkit.pdf)

White, W. (2009). Long-term strategies to reduce the stigma attached to addiction, treatment, and recovery within the City of Philadelphia (with particular reference to medication-assisted treatment/recovery). Philadelphia: Department of Behavioral Health and Mental Retardation Services.

Researchers found even highly trained behavioral health clinicians were significantly more likely to assign blame and believe an individual should be subjected to more punitive rather than therapeutic measures. This result leads to stigmatization of patients in active addiction.

### Do I stigmatize?

Even the most well-meaning professional can have inaccurate assumptions and believe things that cause others to be stigmatized. The following questions can help you to examine your own potential for stigmatizing others:

1. Do you believe some types of addictions are worse than others?
2. Do you believe there are people with addiction who are beyond help?
3. Do you believe certain drug treatment approaches are better than others (abstinent based vs. harm reduction)?

If you answered yes to any of these, you may have a potential for stigmatizing individuals with a substance use disorder.