

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...	NOT THIS...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a substance use disorder or addiction • Person who uses drugs • Person with unhealthy alcohol use • Person's name 	<p>Addict, User, Drug Abuser, Junkie, Crackhead, Tweaker, Pill-popper, Alcoholic, Drunk</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person in remission or recovery 	<p>Sober Clean</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medication for addiction treatment (MAT) • Medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) • Opioid agonist therapy (OAT) • Medication for a substance use disorder • Treatment 	<p>Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) Replacement Therapy Substitution Therapy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risky or unhealthy alcohol use • Using other than prescribed • Use of non-prescribed or illicit substances 	<p>Abuse Misuse</p>
<p>For Toxicology Results Positive test or unexpected result</p> <p>Non-test Related Person who uses drugs</p>	<p>Dirty</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby born with Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal or Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome • Newborn exposed to substances 	<p>Addicted baby Crack baby</p>