

Non-Stigmatizing Language

Reducing Stigma by Using Strength-Based Language



Substance use disorders are chronic illnesses, and recovery can be achieved with treatment and ongoing support. The language that we use can help create an inclusive environment that promotes treatment. Using strength-based and person-first language can help clients feel respected, valued, and help build trust.

Non-Stigmatizing Language	Stigmatizing Language
Person who uses substances	Substance abuser or drug abuser Alcoholic Addict User Abuser Drunk Junkie
Babies affected by maternal opioid use	Addicted babies/born addicted
Substance use disorder or addiction use, misuse Risky, unhealthy, or heavy use Non-medical use	Drug habit Abuse Drug problem
Substance of use	Drug of choice
Person in recovery Abstinent Not drinking or taking drugs	Clean
Medication for addiction treatment (MAT) Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)	Substitution or replacement therapy Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)
Positive/aberrant, negative (toxicology screen results)	Clean or dirty urine
Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) Dispensing	Methadone clinic Dosing
Impaired Intoxicated	Nodding Stoned High
Non-adherent	Failed/failure Non-compliant
Discharge Transferred	Termination Shipped out
Former client Seeing multiple providers	Frequent flyer Doctor shopping

Call MCPAP for Moms at 855-MOM-MCPAP (855-666-6272).