



# *The Impact of Stigma*

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Strategies for Creating Healthier Communities

# *Today's objectives:*

- Participants will be able to:
  - Recognize stigma behaviors and attitudes
  - Discuss the potential impacts of stigma
  - Identify strategies to reduce stigma behaviors and attitudes

# What is Stigma?

- “turning a whole and usual person to a tainted and discounted one” ...
- “.... experiences rejection of their identity”
- “spoiled identity”
  - Lost dignity
    - Marginalized (*less than*)
      - “Rendered invisible”

(Goffman, 1963)



# Words We Hear...

Junkie

Stoner

Crackhead

User

Addict

Alcoholic

Abuser

Stigmatizing key words and phrases found in clinical notes for patients with substance-related diagnoses



The size of a word/phrase is relative to the number of times it was used (i.e., larger words/phrases were found more times in clinical notes).

Taken from: STASH, Vo. 19(4) April 11, 20223, Providers use of stigmatizing language in clinical notes for patients with substance related diagnosis.

*Impact on communities*

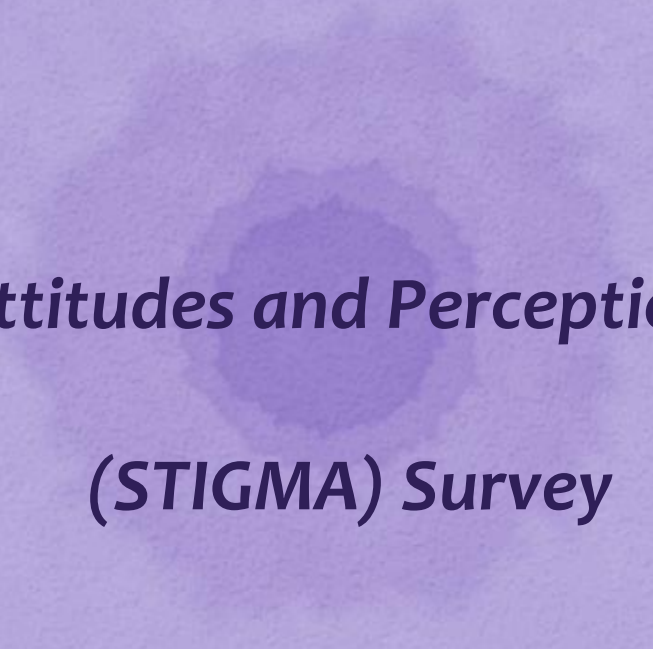




## Impact on Women and Children



(NIDA, July 25, 2022, *Our Words Matter – Language Showing Compassion and Care for Women, Infants, Families, and Communities Impacted by Substance Use Disorder*)



# ***Attitudes and Perceptions***

## ***(STIGMA) Survey***

**2022**

***Mercer County***

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*Full report presented on January 10, 2023 to Mercer County Overdose Workgroup  
by University of Pittsburgh/PERU*



# Stigma Survey

Statement	Domain	Statement	Domain
If a person is addicted to a prescription opioid, they can stop using it if they really want to.	Stereotype	Using words like "addict", "junkie", and "abuser" are harmless. No one gets hurt.	Stereotype
A substance use disorder is a chronic illness just like diabetes, arthritis, or heart disease.	Stereotype	People with a substance use disorder are dangerous.	Stereotype
A person with a substance use disorder is selfish.	Stereotype	I can easily spot someone with a substance use disorder in my community.	Prejudice
I would willingly administer naloxone (Narcan) to someone who has overdosed.	Naloxone	I do NOT want to live in the same neighborhood as someone with a substance use disorder.	Prejudice
There should be a limit to how many times a person can receive naloxone (Narcan) for an overdose.	Naloxone	If I thought my friend had a substance use disorder, I would stay away from them.	Prejudice
Increasing the use of naloxone (Narcan) just gives people with a substance use disorder an excuse to continue using.	Naloxone	I would be embarrassed to tell people that someone in my family has a substance use disorder.	Prejudice
Using a combination of medications with counseling and therapy is an effective treatment for substance use disorder.	Treatment	People with substance use disorders need a supportive community that encourages their recovery.	Stereotype
There are NO effective treatments for substance use disorder.	Treatment	People with a substance use disorder can fully recover.	Stereotype
Abstinence-based therapy is the ONLY successful form of treatment for substance use disorders.	Treatment	Only adults develop substance use disorders.	Stereotype
People who go to drug rehab or treatment will use drugs or overdose again.	Treatment	Only poor people develop substance use disorders.	Stereotype
Anyone can develop a substance use disorder.	Stereotype	Black people are MORE likely than white people to develop substance use disorders.	Stereotype
A person with a substance use disorder has the same right to have a job as everyone else.	Stereotype		





# SUD Statements with Most Stigmatized Responses

1. “I can easily **spot** someone with a substance use disorder.”
2. “If a person is addicted to a prescription opioid, they can stop using it if they really want to.”
3. “People with a substance use disorder are **dangerous**.”
4. “An individual with a substance use disorder is selfish.”
5. “People who go to drug rehab or treatment will use drugs or overdose **again**.”



# SUD Statements with Least Stigmatized Responses

1. “Only **adults** develop substance use disorders.”
2. “Only **poor people** develop substance use disorders.”
3. “People with substance use disorders need a **supportive community** that encourages their recovery.”\*
4. “People of color are MORE likely than white people to develop substance use disorders.”
5. “There are **NO** effective treatments for substance use disorders.”

\* The statement was worded so that agreement indicates lower levels of stigma.



# What Can We Do?

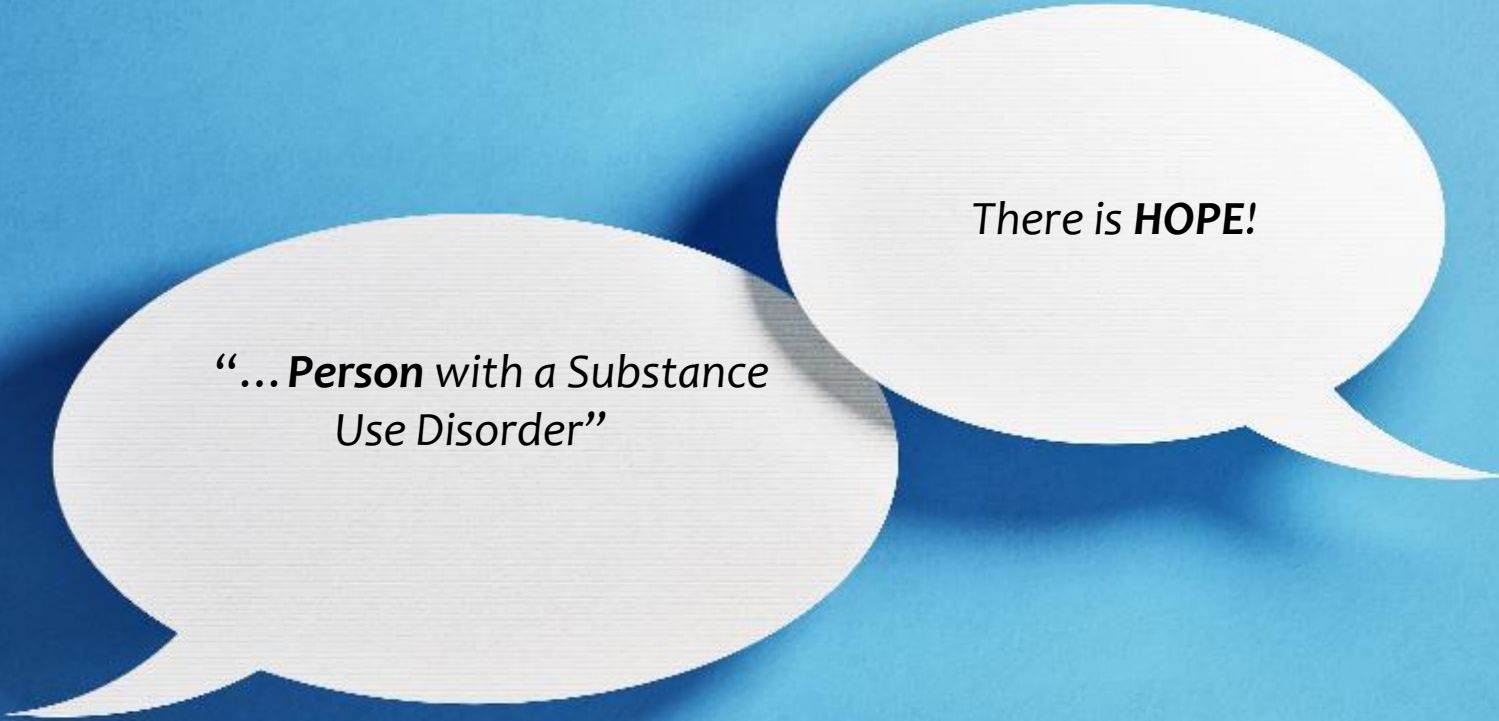




Educate



# Communicate

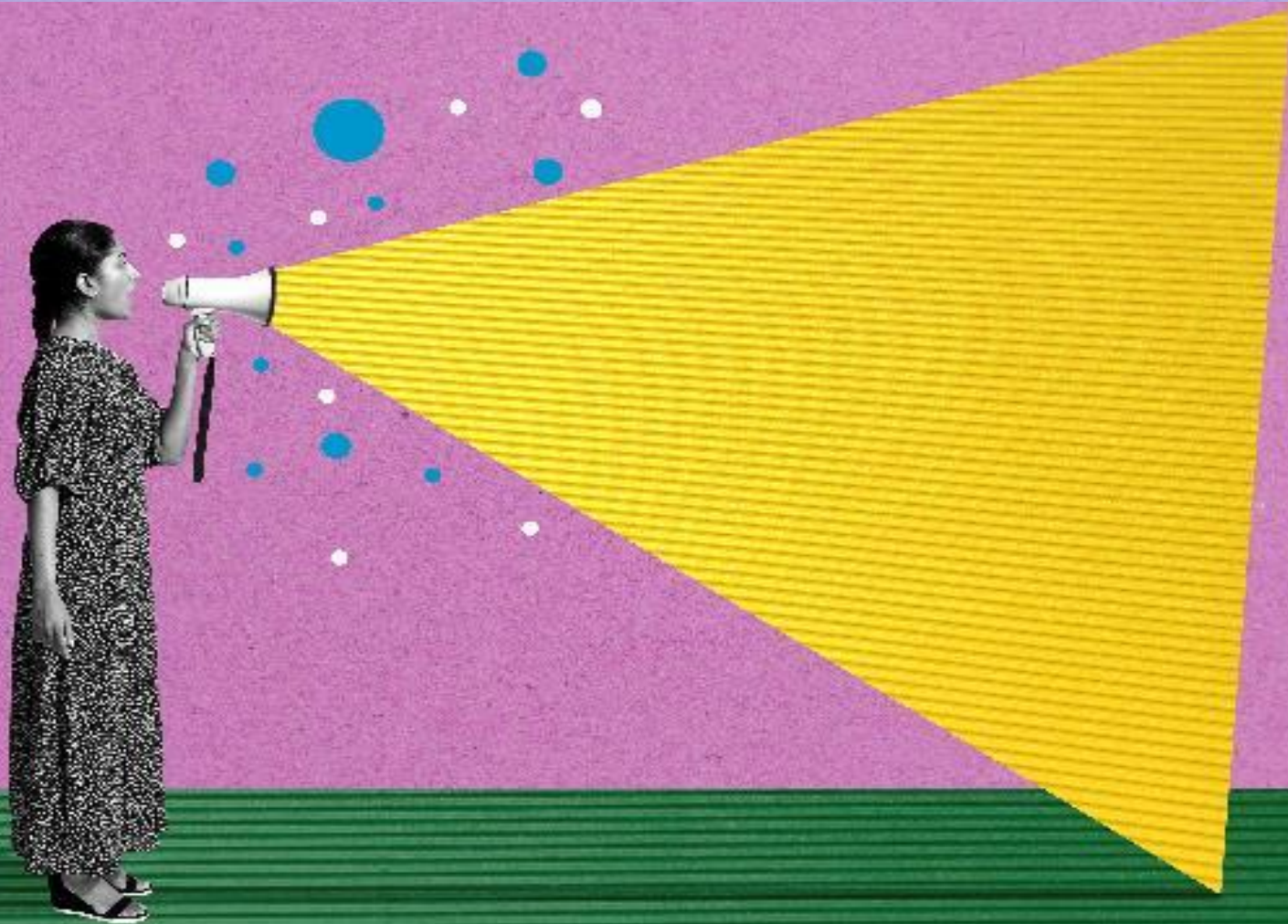


“... **Person** with a Substance  
Use Disorder”

There is **HOPE!**



# Advocate





# TAKE AWAYS

- Stigma language and attitudes create barriers.
- Connection with a person with substance use disorder will help to reduce stigma behaviors/attitudes.
- Biases can be changed.
- Anyone Can Make a Difference!

# Resources

- Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission, Inc.  
**Central Intake Unit - 724-662-2230**
- PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs  
**1-800-662-HELP(4357)**



*Thank you!*

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