

Erasing the Stigma of Opioid Use Disorder



Recognize Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) as a chronic disease

All of us need to understand that OUD is a disease. Similar to depression, arthritis or diabetes, OUD has real, physical causes. As with other chronic diseases, OUD can be treated and long-term recovery is possible.

Increase OUD awareness

Getting **prompt treatment** for opioid dependence and withdrawal **can prevent opioid misuse**. Healthcare staff should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of OUD and facilitate linkage to appropriate services.



Treat people who have OUD with respect

Healthcare staff need to foster openness and trust with people living with OUD. They **deserve the same respect as someone recovering from surgery** or any other chronic condition.

Use respectful person-centered language

Work on changing the language around OUD throughout the organization at all levels. Start a campaign to **raise awareness** of the damaging effects of stigmatizing language. Help coworkers recognize stigmatizing language in day to day conversations, and have staff sign a language pledge.

