



Anti-Stigma Initiative

BACKGROUND

What is stigma?

Individuals with a substance use disorder (SUD) are subject to very harsh moral judgments and frequent discrimination. Research has found that individuals who experience stigma due to an SUD are more likely to continue engaging in substance use and manifest greater delayed treatment access and higher rates of dropout. Beliefs about SUDs as a personal choice and not a health condition are an indicator of stigma.

Decreasing stigma involves increasing addiction literacy levels to counteract education gaps and misconceptions about SUDs. Understanding addiction as a health condition underscores its treatability, encourages early intervention and access to the healthcare system and better management of the chronic health condition.

ABOUT THE PROJECT



Nationwide Pilot

Addiction Policy Forum's Anti-Stigma Initiative includes over 100 pilot sites nationwide working to:

- Reduce addiction stigma, including stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination intent,
- Increase knowledge about addiction in their communities,
- Improve helping behaviors towards individuals with a substance use disorder, and
- Identify levels of addiction stigma in a community to establish a baseline indicator.

100 SITES

EVIDENCE-BASED

PROJECT COMPONENTS

The National Academy of Sciences highlights five effective stigma reduction strategies in their 2016 report on stigma:

1. Education and awareness where the intervention replaces myths around addiction with accurate information.
2. Literacy programs to improve knowledge, attitudes, and help-seeking behaviors.
3. Contact strategies that engage individuals with lived experience to reduce prejudice.
4. Protest/advocacy efforts.
5. Policy and legislative change to protect and improve services for stigmatized individuals.

Stigma Survey



Sites will participate in a study conducted by the University of Delaware and the Addiction Policy Forum to measure addiction knowledge, confidence in how to respond to a substance use disorder, and levels of stigma, including stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.

The project will measure the levels of stigma across stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination intent toward people with an SUD or those in recovery. Levels of support for public health responses to addiction and willingness to locate treatment and recovery services locally were also measured across the state.

Stigma Intervention



Pilot sites will help field test the Responding to Addiction intervention developed by the Addiction Policy Forum to increase knowledge about substance use disorders, correct misconceptions, and reduce stigma. The intervention teaches participants about the science of addiction, evidence-based treatment options, medications to treat addiction, skills to better respond to an individual with an SUD, and key components of recovery support.

References

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