

September is National Recovery Month, which increases awareness and understanding of mental health and substance use disorders, encourages individuals in need of treatment and recovery services to seek help, and celebrates individuals living their lives in recovery.

Addiction to drugs, also known as a substance use disorder, is a disease that affects thousands of Hoosiers. Those who are struggling with this disorder are unable to control their use of legal or illegal drugs. For many, addiction begins quietly, perhaps with the recreational use of a drug. Oftentimes, this drug is marijuana. Many recovery stories begin with individuals describing their first use of marijuana as early as 10-11 years old. In the case of opioids and other painkillers, addiction may begin when a doctor prescribes a medication. Whatever the reason, once addicted, this disease affects a person's brain, and they will continue to use the drug despite the consequences.

Stigma

Many of those struggling with addiction are people we know – our family members, our friends, our co-workers, our neighbors. They face a wide range of stigmas that may prevent them from seeking treatment.

A stigma is a mark of disgrace that sets a person or a group apart. When people are labeled primarily because of their substance use disorder, they are being negatively stereotyped.

Language that includes biased and hurtful words can lead to discrimination and social exclusion. Stigma and discrimination are barriers not only to acknowledging the problem, but also to seeking and accessing treatment and ultimately, recovery.

Here are some examples of stigma-reducing language that should be used, from the National Council for Behavioral Health, "Language Matters." (2015)

Say this...

"Person with opioid use disorder"

"Disease"

"Person living in recovery"

"Person arrested for a drug violation"

"Substance dependent"

"Medication is a treatment tool"

"Had a setback"

"Maintained recovery; substance-free"

"Negative drug screen"

Not this...

"Addict, user, druggie, junkie, abuser"

"Drug habit"

"Ex-addict"

"Drug offender"

"Hooked"

"Medication is a crutch"

"Relapsed"

"Stayed clean"

"Clean"

“Positive drug screen”

“Dirty drug screen”

Treatment

While there are many different types of treatment, there is no single solution or quick fix to addiction. The right treatment, or combination of treatment methods, is unique to each individual. Counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy includes both individual and group counseling sessions that help someone learn and practice positive, drug-free thoughts and behaviors. Therapy may also include referrals to other medical/psychiatric, psychological and social services, including assistance with employment, housing and family services.

Don't wait. Get help now.

Call 2-1-1 for help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Through a partnership between Indiana 211 and OpenBeds, people seeking treatment for substance use disorders can be immediately connected with available inpatient or residential treatment services. The Indiana Addiction Hotline can also be utilized: 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

Behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can recover from mental and/or substance use disorders.

For more information, please visit our website at www.drugfreeadamscounty.org.