

WORDS MATTER

Stigmatizing language perpetuates negative stereotypes, spreads misinformation, and keeps people with substance use disorders from seeking help.



FROM THE
2016
SURGEON
GENERAL'S
REPORT ON
ALCOHOL,
DRUGS, AND
HEALTH

78 people die

every day in the United States from
an opioid overdose.

Only 20 percent

of people who currently need treatment for
opioid use disorders are receiving it.

Reasons for not seeking treatment:

- Lack of access to treatment
- Fear of losing their job
- Fear of rejection by family and friends
- Fear of failure in their effort to change

To reduce stigma and help people get the treatment they need,
avoid these all-too-common language mistakes:



DON'T SAY:



SAY:

Drug abuse, addiction



Substance use disorder

Junkie, addict, crackhead, druggie



Person with a substance use disorder,
active drug user

Ex-addict, former addict



Person in recovery

Dirty, clean



Positive, negative drug screen

Opiate substitution treatment



Medication assisted treatment

Clean, sober



In recovery

Relapse



Recurrence of use

