Changing the Culture Around Substance Use Disorders

2024 Rural Michigan Opioid and Substance Use Summit

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Substance Use Stigma Assessment and Response Project

Purpose:
Assess the prevalence of stigma regarding SUDs in specific subpopulations in the Northwest Community Health Innovation Region to inform effective and targeted interventions to reduce the impact of stigma and improve outcomes for people experiencing SUDs
Addressing substance use disorders in northwest Michigan is urgent.

Increasing access to SUD services was identified as a priority strategic issue in the 2021 MiThrive Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) conducted across the ten counties of the NWCHIR.

In 2023, there were 59 overdose deaths within the 10 NWCHIR counties (MDHHS MOTA Dashboard, 2024).
The Challenge

Despite the reality that substance use disorders are associated with changes in brain circuitry, people with substance use disorders often face significant stigma for “choosing” to use. As a result, they are sometimes viewed as “bad”, “weak”, or “unfit for society”.

Stigma is real and it gets in the way of recovery. For millions of Americans, and those who love them, ending stigma is a matter of survival.
Our Goals

• Assess and evaluate the prevalence of stigma against substance use disorders in the public and in target populations in the Northwest CHIR

• Design a campaign and interventions to change perceptions of people with substance use disorders and reduce stigma
Since 2021, 33 stakeholders in the NWCHIR have been engaged in the work of this Action Team.
Implementation Steps

01 Funding
Received funding from NACCHO for a one year project to assess and address stigma against SUDs in NW MI.

02 Develop Surveys
Developed a public stigma assessment tool, healthcare provider tool, law enforcement/first reponder tool, and self-stigma assessment tool with the support of CDC’s Dr. Yang.

03 Distribute Survey 1
Distributed the public stigma assessment tool in September 2022. We also distributed the public assessment to four local health departments.

04 Distribute Additional Surveys
1,374 respondents across 10 counties (Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Wexford). Respondents answered 38 questions (including background questions) virtually on the Alchemer platform. The assessment was distributed between Aug 15th to Sept. 19th 2022.

Demographics: 78% of the respondents were white. The average age is between 35-44 years old and the average income is $50,000 to $89,999. Additionally, 53% were females and 46% were males. 46% have a bachelors degree or higher.
Public Stigma One-Pager
Data: Public Assessment

**Support Everyone At-Risk of Witnessing an Overdose Should Carry Naloxone**

- 62.2% of individuals who know someone with a SUD agree.
- 33.1% of individuals who do not know someone with a SUD agree.

**Would Assist Someone Who is Having an Overdose**

- 75.1% of individuals who know someone with a SUD agree.
- 53.5% of individuals who do not know someone with a SUD agree.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Harm Reduction Strategies</th>
<th>66.3% Strongly Support or Somewhat Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Safe Consumption Sites</td>
<td>51.0% Strongly Support or Somewhat Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Syringe Service Programs</td>
<td>54.8% Strongly Support or Somewhat Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Needle Distribution Programs</td>
<td>59.7% Strongly Support or Somewhat Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Stigma One-Pager
Implementation of the Interventions

Implement Social Media Campaign

The Action Team developed the materials for a series of Facebook posts sharing information about stigma toward substance use disorders in the region. These posts are designed to educate the public about:

- What substance use disorders are and how substance use can change a person’s brain chemistry
- The results of the public stigma assessment
- The resources in the region for people with substance use disorders
- What they can do to reduce stigma towards people with substance use disorders and, thereby, improve their quality of life
- How they can support the people with substance use disorders in their life and in their community

This social media campaign was launched in August on the District Health Department #10 Facebook Page!

Create Story-telling Videos

Highlight Hope

Sharing and celebrating recovery stories connects community members with one another and empowers those who are still struggling to know they are not alone. It also helps to eliminate the stigma people in recovery often face and educate the public that recovery is possible. (Source: Faces and Voices of Recovery)
ADDICTION IS A DISEASE, NOT A DECISION

#DidYouKnow that 84% of participants in Northwest Michigan agree that “Most people in my community believe that a person who uses cocaine, methamphetamine, opioid, or heroin is to blame for their own problems”?

Help us #StopStigma! Please visit: https://beatthestigma.org/

To see more information about the BHI’s Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Stigma Action Team: https://northernmichiganchir.org/northwest-chir/behavioral-health-initiative/action-team-reduce-stigma-against-substance-use-disorders/
Reduce Stigma Regarding SUDs Video
https://youtu.be/xm_4dycn7NA?si=-EJOwlUR4dNYPi7Y
What message stood out to you from this video?
Conducted a virtual presentation for Munson Healthcare Providers in October 2023.

We developed a law enforcement toolkit that law enforcement and first responders can use on their own.
Saying goodbye to hurtful, stigmatizing language.

The words we use communicate our attitudes, biases and stereotypes.
Words Hold Power!
What words come to mind that people use to describe someone with a SUD?
Words Hold Power

Language is powerful, and our choice of words can either break down misconceptions and stereotypes or feed into them. Stigmatizing language - such as “substance abuse” - perpetuates negative perceptions, which can result in people being excluded from jobs, housing, social activities, and relationships. Additionally, people may begin to believe the negative things that others say about them. Stigmatizing language has been found to discourage people from seeking help. People do not want to be labeled "an addict," “junkie“, or “dirty.”

Taking caution with our words is the first step to creating and fostering a stigma-free environment where everyone can feel empowered to seek treatment and manage their SUD.
Think about perceptions of persons with a substance use disorder. How do people in your social network feel about:

- Being friends with this person
- Being a co-worker or hiring this person
- Dating this person or having them join their family
Avoid these phrases.
These common phrases are often used in casual conversation, at home, work, or with friends. Most people would view these phrases as harmless, but the intent doesn't always match the impact. These and other similar phrases can perpetuate stigma.

You are at work and a co-worker says, “I heard that we just hired, John, and he is an ex-addict. I hope he stays clean.” How would you have a conversation with that co-worker about problematic stigmatizing language?
Reducing the Stigma Example Training

Making a Difference:

What are some specific actions you can take to make change to reduce stigma in your organization and/or communities?

Changing the Culture Around Substance Use Disorders - Rural Michigan Substance use Summit
Conclusion

To see more information about the BHI’s Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Stigma Action Team:


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