



# Purpose

- To provide practical information and tools to enhance and engage in effective stigma prevention
- To heighten understanding of stigma and provide a context for understanding addiction-related stigma.
- Discuss the different types of addiction-related stigma

# Substance Use Disorder

- According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), substance use disorder affects approximately 23.5 million Americans every year, and roughly only 11 percent receive treatment
- Stigma is actually cited as the second largest barrier for individuals considering treatment. It is second only to cost
- Research unveiled that 82.2 percent of individuals struggling with addiction have felt stigmatized, and 73.9 percent of these individuals have felt most stigmatized by family members

# Substance Use Disorder

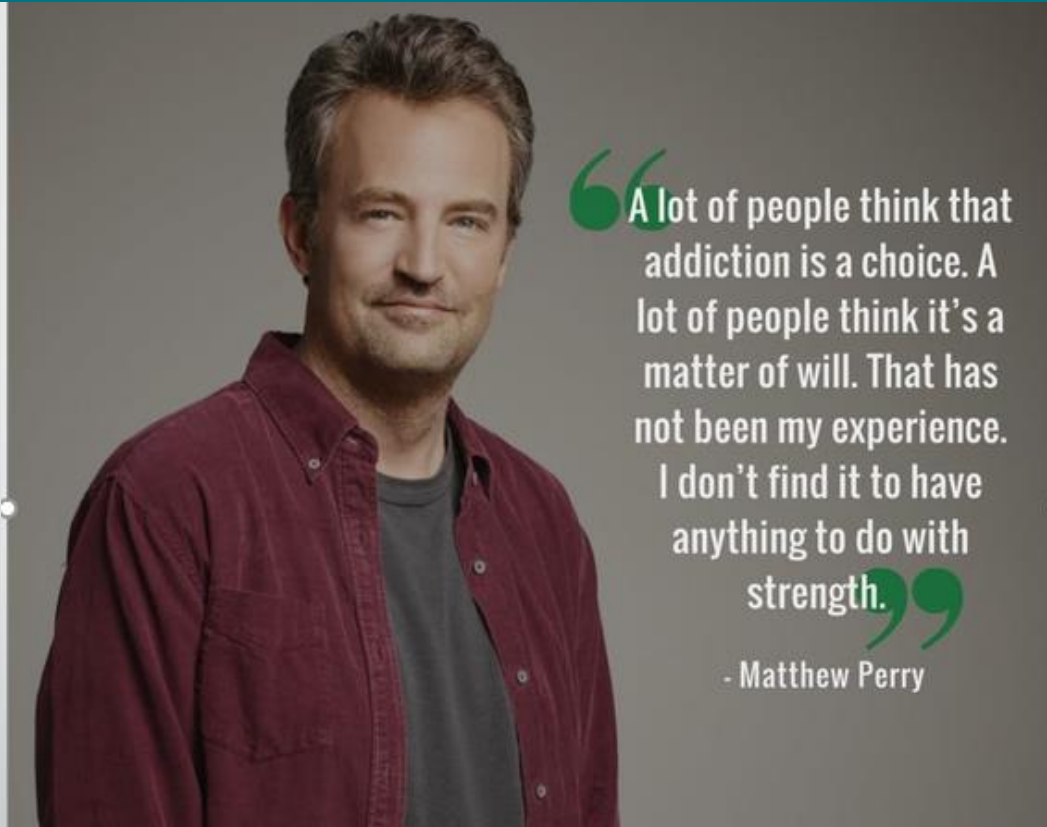
- Science has helped us understand that it is a CHRONIC disease
- It is a disease that can be treated----- and treated successfully
- NO one chooses to develop this disease
- **Substance Use disorder** is a combination of genetic predisposition and environmental stimulus – comparable to other chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension – can result in physical changes to the brain's circuitry, which lead to tolerance, cravings, and the characteristic compulsive and destructive behaviors of addiction that are such a large public health burden for our nation.

# Did you Know?

- Illicit drug use is the most stigmatized health condition in the WORLD
- Degree of stigma is related to the perceived cause of the condition.
- What do we think the cause of substance use disorder is?

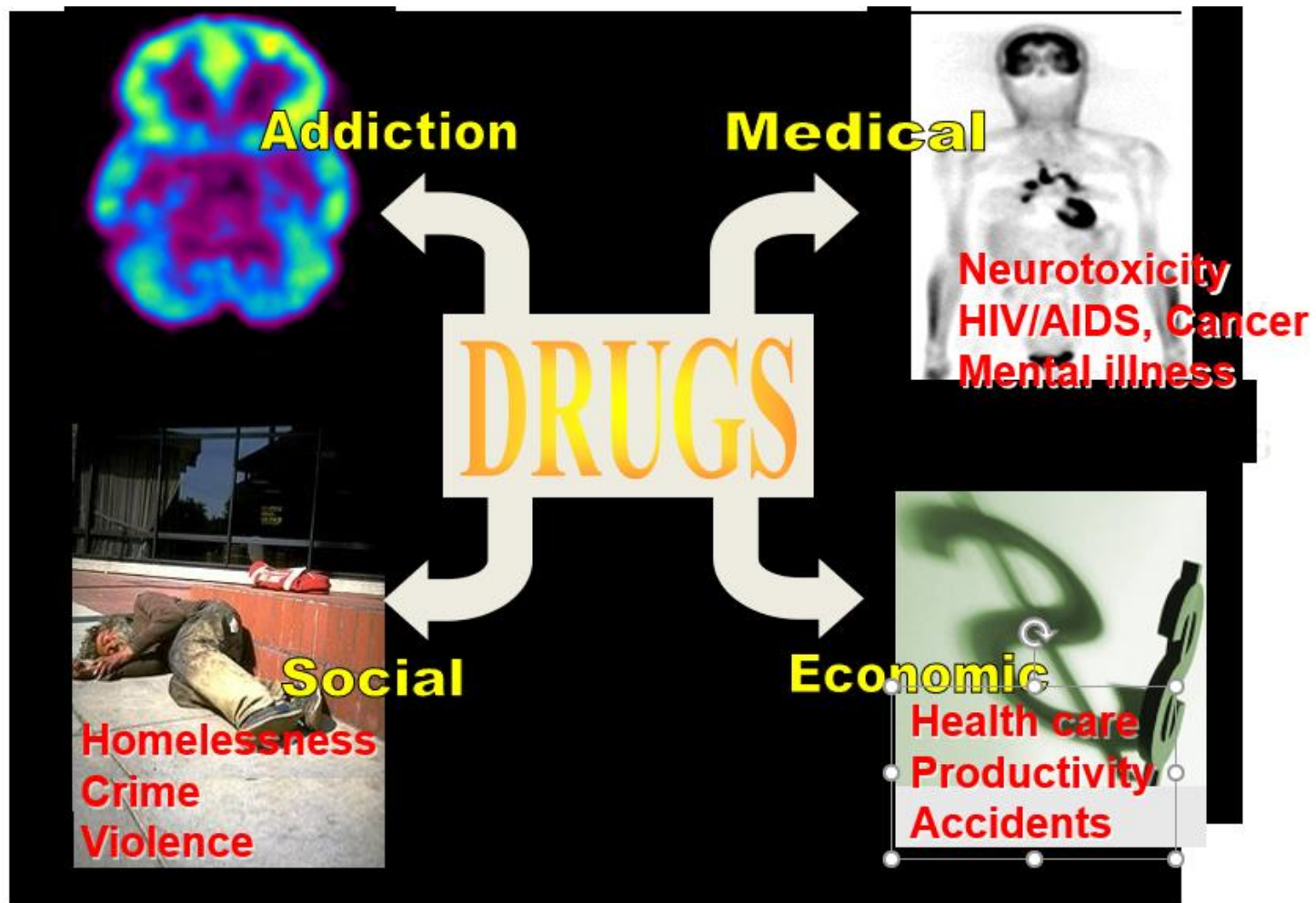
## Is it a CHOICE?

# Substance Use is not a CHOICE



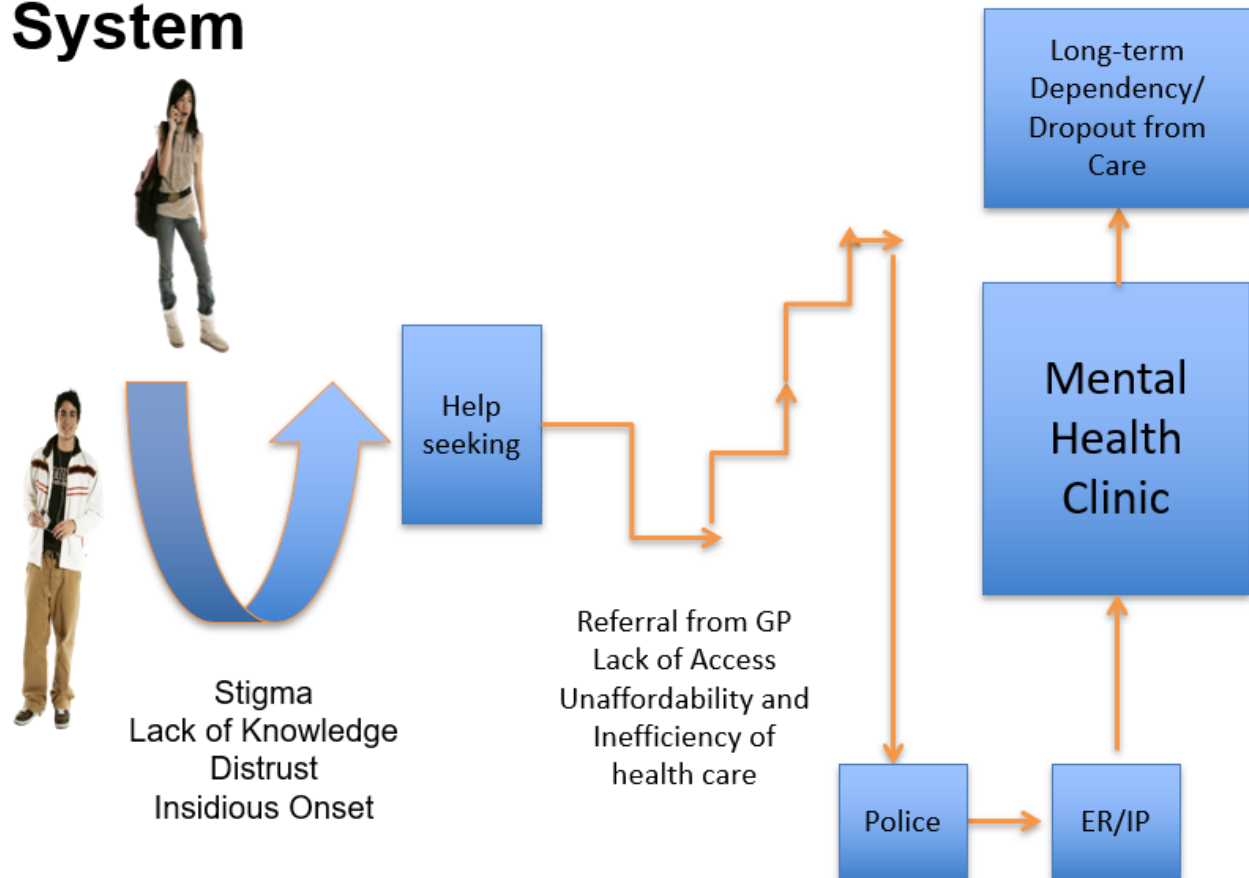
It is NOT a moral failing or a character flaw.

# The IMPACT



# Problem

## Current System



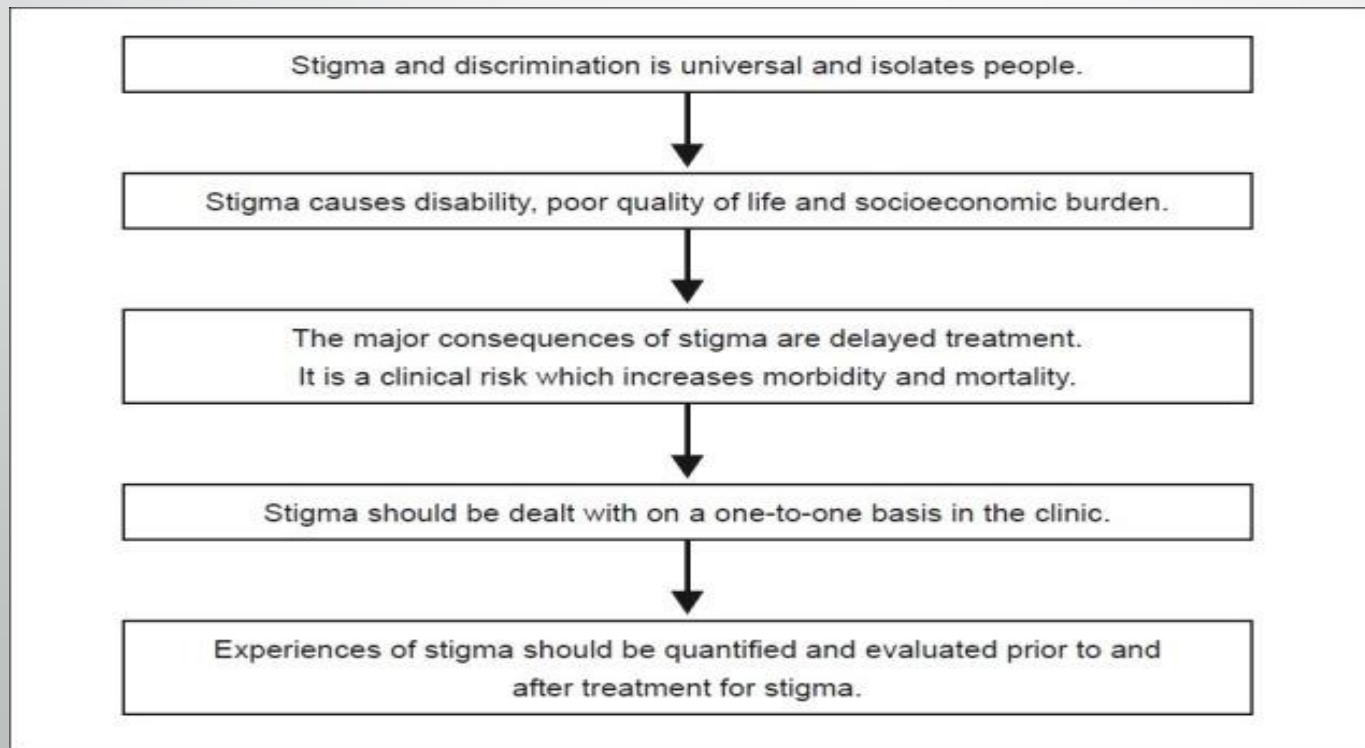
***May not receive treatment for a decade after diagnosis***

*Compton M, Broussard B: Current Psych Reviews 2011, 7, 1-11*



# Origination of Stigma

- Several studies show that stigma usually arises from lack of awareness, lack of education, lack of perception, and the nature and complications of the illness, for example odd behaviors and violence (Arboleda-Florez, 2002).



# What IS Stigma?

- Stigma refers to attitudes and beliefs that lead people to reject, avoid, or fear those they perceive as being different.
- 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.

# Stigma

- Stigma results in prejudice, avoidance, rejection, and discrimination against people who have a socially undesirable trait or engage in culturally marginalized behaviors, such as drug use (Link, 2001).
- Family, friends and the general public can carry negative feelings about drug use or behavior.
- They may even use derogatory terms such as “junkie,” “alcoholic,” or “crackhead.” These thoughts, feelings, and labels can create and perpetuate stigma.

# Stigma

- Treatment interventions aimed to decrease drug use are not usually supported by the public and believed by some to facilitate and encourage drug use – despite evidence demonstrating that they actually decrease drug use (Logan & Marlatt, 2010).
- People in recovery often experience stigma, which can likewise jeopardize their recovery.
- Stigma can diminish people's ability to follow a path of health regarding the body, mind, and spirit.

# Stigma

- The 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that **21.5 million Americans age 12 and older had a substance use disorder in the previous year**; however, sadly **only 2.5 million received the specialized treatment they needed.**
- In a study done by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the general public was more likely to have negative attitudes towards those dealing with drug addiction than those who were dealing with mental illness.

# Stigma

In a survey conducted with people who use drugs, the respondents provided written reflections about what they wished people or society at large understood about addiction

"Just because I am/was an addict, doesn't make me a bad person. Deep down inside we are wonderful, loving people."

"It's not a matter of willpower or a lack of a moral compass."

"Addiction is not the entirety of me. I am me; I am not just my addiction. There is a lot of other stuff to love."

"I wish people saw the time that addicts spent alone. Thinking about everything they've done every time they've lied and stole."

# What is Discrimination?

- Discrimination occurs when people and entities act upon these attitudes and beliefs in ways that can deprive others of their rights and life opportunities.
- Discrimination can include behaviors that result in the exclusion or marginalization of others
- It can include illegal acts of abuse or actions that deprive people of their civil rights, access to fair housing options, opportunities for employment, education, and full participation in civic life.

# Stigma and Discrimination

- Stigma- refers to unfavorable ATTITUDES and BELIEFS directed toward someone or something
- Discrimination-refers to the TREATMENT of an individual or group with partiality or prejudice

***Stigmatization reflects an ATTITUDE***  
***Discrimination is an ACT or BEHAVIOR***



# Stigma

- Language that includes biased and hurtful words can lead to discrimination and social exclusion
- Stigma and discrimination are barriers to acknowledging the problem, seeking and accessing treatment and ultimately – to recovery
- Language is powerful – especially when talking about addictions.

# Words Matter

- Here are some examples of stigma reducing language that should be used.

\*\*Note some of these terms are not universally agreed upon among providers.

Say this...	Not this...
Person with opioid use disorder	Addict, user, druggie, junkie, abuser
Disease	Drug habit
Person living in recovery	Ex-addict
Person arrested for a drug violation	Drug offender
Substance dependent	Hooked
Medication is a treatment tool	Medication is a crutch
Had a setback	Relapsed
Maintained recovery; substance-free	Stayed clean
Negative drug screen	Clean
Positive drug screen	Dirty drug screen

# Stigma from Within

- The lives of people with substance abuse:
  - have become unmanageable.
  - they may experience low self-esteem
  - they have hurt themselves and others
  - they feel like victims or blame themselves
  - they feel that they don't have the power to get better.

# Stigma From the Recovering Community

- Although the processes of addiction and recovery are more similar than different among different drugs, recovering people stigmatize one another.
- Some people recovering from alcohol addiction stigmatize people recovering from crack cocaine and heroin
- Some recovering people who smoked or drank their drug look down on injection drug users.

# Stigma from Treatment Providers

- Some providers feel:
  - that medical addiction treatment is ineffective
  - some providers prefer abstinence-oriented programs and feel that maintenance programs involve trading one drug for another.
  - that non-recovering counselors are superior to those in recovery
  - while others believe that non-recovering counselors are not able to fully understand the addiction and recovery processes.

# Stigma from Outside

- People in recovery can face an assault of stigma from the general public.
- Fueled by ignorance, misinformation, and fear, the general public is never in short supply of mistrust, discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes.
- These include unconscious remarks and behaviors, as well as purposeful and mean-spirited actions.

# How Stigma Hurts

- Stigma can negatively impact a number of areas, including:
  - Willingness to attend treatment and access to healthcare.
  - Harm reduction.
  - Self-esteem and mental health.

# Help reduce stigma

- Offering compassionate support.
- Displaying kindness to people in vulnerable situations.
- Listening while withholding judgment.
- Seeing a person for who they are, not what drugs they use.
- Doing your research; learning about drug dependency and how it works.
- Treating people with drug dependency with dignity and respect.
- Avoiding hurtful labels.
- Replacing negative attitudes with evidence-based facts.
- Speaking up when you see someone mistreated because of their drug use.



# In Summary

- First, we must change the conversation about what it means to have a substance use disorder, and increase access to evidence-based treatments.
- This means putting an end to stigma, increasing access to medication that can treat opioid use disorder, and supporting the expanded use of naloxone – a life-saving medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid-related overdose.
- People with addiction deserve to be treated like any other patient with a medical disease,

# Making the SHIFT

If Narcan is free for addicts, why isn't chemo free for cancer patients?

# Making the SHIFT

- Because EMT's have an obligation to revive you in an emergency, NOT treat you.
- Narcan is NOT a treatment for addiction.
- If an addict calls 911, they do NOT get free treatment or free methadone/suboxone.
- They get revived, that's it.
- IF a cancer patient's heart gives out and 911 is called, they don't get free chemo, they get revived, that's it.
- And BOTH will be revived repeatedly in emergencies until they either get treatment, die, or sign a DNR form
- And BOTH will be given ambulance bills each time.
- Narcan is to overdose as electric heart paddles are to heart failure.
- Both may revive you temporarily but neither will beat the underlying disease.

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the green leaves of the trees, creating a dappled light effect on the path. The text is centered over the image in a white, serif font.

Substance Use Disorder is  
nothing to be ashamed of, but  
stigma and discrimination  
shame us all

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