

# I PLEDGE

to stop the stigma  
associated with addiction

## Words Matter What we say and how we say it makes a difference.

We can be a model and help to lead the way toward ending the opioid epidemic by using language that de-stigmatizes the disease of substance use disorder.

That means using terminology that recognizes that substance use disorder is a chronic illness, not a moral failing, and people can and do recover.

Why do words matter? Studies show that about one in 12 people with substance use disorder get treatment. Stigma is a key barrier. Using the right language, and putting the person first has a real impact on reducing stigma and helping people with substance use disorder seek and get the treatment they need.

We invite you to sign the Words Matter pledge, originally developed by the Grayken Center for Addiction at Boston Medical Center, and help us toward a goal of creating a stigma-free environment at our hospitals, universities, companies, and in our community.

### NON-STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE

- Person with a substance use disorder

- Babies with an opioid dependency

- Substance use disorder or addiction
- Use, misuse
- Risky, unhealthy, or heavy use

- Person in recovery
- Abstinent
- Not drinking or taking drugs

- Treatment or medication for addiction
- Medication for Opioid Use Disorder/Alcohol Use Disorder

- Positive, negative (toxicology screen results)

### STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE

- Substance abuser or drug abuser
- Alcoholic
- Addict
- User
- Abuser
- Drunk
- Junkie

- Addicted Babies/Born addicted

- Drug habit
- Abuse
- Problem

- Clean

- Substitution or replacement therapy
- Medication-Assisted Treatment

- Clean, dirty

**I believe that the words I use in talking about substance use disorder are important in reducing stigma. I pledge to treat all people with a substance use disorder with dignity and respect. I pledge to talk about addiction as a chronic illness, not a moral failing. I pledge to be a leader in reducing stigma and promoting recovery from this disease.**

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_