



Using Person-Centered Language to Avoid Stigmatizing Individuals with Substance Use Disorders

[Language matters](#) when it comes to advocating with and for individuals with substance use disorders. Many of the common terms used in describing people with problematic use of drugs and alcohol [further add to the stigmatizing](#) and discrimination of this community. Here are some [alternative words and phrases to consider](#):

Instead of using the term...	Consider using the following term...
Addict; Abuser; Junkie	Person/Someone with Addiction; Individual in recovery or individual seeking recovery; Person with a substance use disorder
Clean i.e. “ She has been clean for 10 years or She is finally clean and off drugs”	She has been in recovery for 10 years or She is currently in recovery
Dirty i.e. “ The drug test came back dirty”	The drug test came back positive for drugs
User or Abuser	Individuals with addiction or substance use disorder
Drug problem; Drug Habit	Problematic use of drugs and alcohol
Reformed Addict or Reformed Alcoholic	Person in recovery
Experimental User; Recreational User	Person starting to use drugs
Substitution Therapy/Replacement Therapy	Medication-Assisted Treatment or Medication-Assisted Recovery

Community Catalyst works to ensure consumer interests are represented wherever important decisions about health and the health system are made: in communities, courtrooms, statehouses and on Capitol Hill.

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