

How To **Combat Stigma**

Within the Mental Health System

- ✓ Human Resources
- Psychiatrists
- Administrators
- Finance Directors
- Quality Improvement
- Customer Service
- Program Supervisors
- Front Line Workers
- Peer Support Specialists

Created by the
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Steering Committee
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Combating Stigma

IN THE MENTAL
HEALTH SYSTEM

HUMAN
RESOURCES

**LOOK
CLOSER**

...

See me for
who I am

When we come into our workplace, we bring our diverse life experiences with us. These experiences can affect our attitudes and behaviors, whether we are aware of it or not. If we're not careful we may find ourselves behaving in ways that could be considered stigmatizing by the people we serve. We all want to be the very best we can in our interactions with those who have come to us for help. The following are a few statements that can be used to identify stigmatizing attitudes and behaviors:



You Know You're Stigmatizing If You...

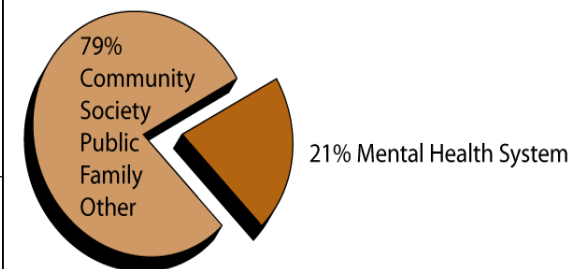
- use words like crazy, psycho, loony, etc., to describe individuals.
- refer to individuals with mental illness as "difficult" or "non-compliant."
- treat individuals with mental illness differently than providers, including in your speech and body language.
- are not making information on health benefits available and easily accessible to individuals with mental illness.
- do not promote prevention, early intervention and wellness programs.

What Every Human Resource Professional Should Know About Stigma

Did you know?

- Mental illness is the leading cause of indirect costs associated with lost work time? Supporting employees' mental wellness results in increased productivity, lower medical costs and less absenteeism.
- Concern about the stigma associated with depression may prevent employees from seeking treatment.
- Concern about losing status at work and about confidentiality are among the main reasons many American workers are more hesitant to seek treatment for mental health related issues than for physical health problems.
- Many employees feel they will be fired if someone finds out about their mental health issues.

Who discriminated against you?



SAMSHA's ADS Center (2007) Improving Provider Attitudes and Practices toward People with Mental Illness

What You Can Do

- Mandate trainings that address stress management, stigma, discrimination, and the use of person-first language as part of the agency's overall disease and wellness management strategy.
- Educate employees on health benefits and available wellness programs, and make efforts to assure they know how to access care. Employees should be reassured about confidentiality.
- Educate supervisors and managers to lead by example by being conscious of stigmatizing attitudes and behaviors.
- Create culture that encourages employees to take care of mental health needs.
- Offer health insurance to employees that includes mental health and substance abuse treatment.
- Include questions about stigma and recovery in your interviews with new hires in your department.