

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
Michigan Anti-Stigma
Steering Committee
June 2011



320 South Walnut
Lansing, MI 48933
(517) 335-3845
(517) 335-4798 fax
www.michigan.gov/mdch

Combating Stigma

IN THE MENTAL
HEALTH SYSTEM

PROGRAM
SUPERVISORS

**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.
- deny individuals with mental illness their "dignity of risk" or the ability to learn from their mistakes.

What Every Program Supervisor Should Know About Stigma

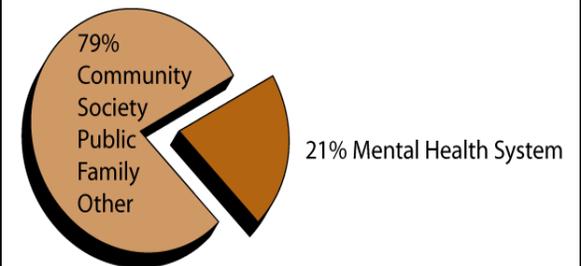
Did you know that stigma...

- Is a barrier to treatment and recovery support services?
- Leads to social avoidance and reduces access to opportunities.
- Leads to low self-esteem, social isolation and hopelessness?
- Can be real discrimination under the ADA and abuse under Recipient Rights?
- Deprives people of dignity and full participation in society?
- Is more painful than then mental health conditions for many people?
- Affects different groups and individuals (consumers, family members, mental health professionals, specific age groups, cultural groups, etc.) in many different ways?
- Affects many areas of life, including health, housing, education, employment, family, friendships, and social support?

What You Can Do

- Educate, train and coach behavioral health staff to assess the impact of stigma and incorporate discussions about stigma into interactions with consumers and families, including treatment planning meetings.
- Address issues relevant to stigma in case conferences, team meetings and supervision.
- If staff are struggling with a case, consider stigma as one possible factor. Help staff identify and make positive changes and support these changes in others.
- Encourage and support peers to share their knowledge about and direct experience with stigma with behavioral health colleagues.
- Develop and advance proposals and recommendations to expand and support the roles of peers and the implementation of consumer-run services at your agency.
- Look for teachable moments with your co-workers when you hear stigmatizing comments.
- Support consumers in challenging discrimination resulting from stigma.

Who discriminated against you?



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