

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

QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT

**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 rudely or less than important.
- make assumptions about the person.
- refer to someone by their diagnosis.
- feel a need to feel superior over someone.

What Every Quality Improvement Professional Should Know About Stigma

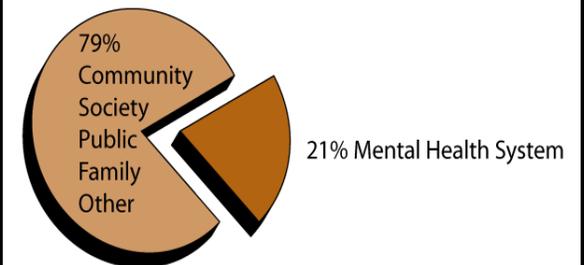
Did you know that stigma....

- 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?
- Results in discrimination and abuse?
- Deprives people of dignity and full participation in society?
- Is more painful than their 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

- Provide a welcoming intake process.
- Include questions about stigma and physical/mental health in assessment interviews and periodic reviews.
- Address issues important to people with disabilities to provide culturally competent services.
- Develop, implement and monitor the effectiveness of strategies your agency uses to reduce stigma as a barrier to service delivery. Make the impact of stigma a priority.
- Develop strategies to integrate peers into your agency's work force.
- Invite consumers and family members to participate in focus groups aimed at eliminating barriers and improving the quality of services.
- Include consumers and family members on committees charged with improving quality of agency programming.
- Include consumers and family members on advisory boards, work groups, boards of directors and provide training to insure success.
- Look for teachable moments with your co-workers when you hear stigmatizing comments.
- When reviewing language in agency forms, provide feedback to providers about stigmatizing language you find, and also about positive recovery oriented practices.

Who discriminated against you?



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