



What we say and how we say it makes a difference to our patients with substance use disorder.

At Boston Medical Center, one of our three core values is **Built on Respect, Powered by Empathy**. It's at the foundation of our mission to provide **Exceptional Care without Exception** and our vision to **Make Boston the Healthiest Urban Population in the World**.

One area where that core value, Built on Respect, Powered by Empathy, is central to all we do is in the care we provide for our patients with substance use disorder.

BMC is widely known as a leader in the treatment of substance use disorder. Care models developed here are helping patients around the country. Our patients know that when they come to BMC they will be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. Our leadership was recognized earlier this year with the pioneering gift we received to launch the Grayken Center for Addiction Medicine.

One way we can all continue to lead and be a model for others is by using language that de-stigmatizes the disease of substance use disorder. It means using clinically appropriate and medically accurate terminology that recognizes substance use disorder is a chronic illness from which people can and do recover, not a moral failing.

Why is this so important? Studies show that only about one in 12 people with substance use disorder get treatment and that stigma is a key barrier for many people who don't seek treatment. Studies also show that even health care professionals and the treatment decisions they make are influenced by how we talk about addiction. Using the right language has a real and direct impact on lessening stigma and on whether people with substance use disorder get the treatment they need. Understanding this, organizations including the American Society of Addiction Medicine have mounted efforts to promote the use of non-stigmatizing language.

As we celebrate National Recovery Month, I invite you to sign our BMC Words Matter pledge. It's an important step toward our goal of creating a stigma-free environment at our hospital and one more way that we can show our leadership at this critical time and our commitment to treatment and recovery for patients with substance use disorder.

Kate Walsh
Boston Medical Center President & CEO

WORDS MATTER: MY PLEDGE

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As a member of the BMC community, I believe that the language I use about substance use disorders is important. Using the right language helps decrease stigma that can prevent patients from seeking care. I pledge to treat all people with a substance use disorder with dignity and respect. I believe that words matter and 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: _____

Department: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



NON-STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE

- Person with a substance use disorder
- Babies born 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

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