

Stigma and Behavioral Health

The Background

- The term behavioral health encompasses mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) conditions.
- One in four Americans experience a behavioral health issue.
- Behavioral health issues affect every race, creed, color, religion, income level, neighborhood, national origin, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Many Frederick residents are not aware of existing behavioral health services.
- *But many residents who do know about these services are reluctant to seek help because of stigma.*
- The cost of not getting help to the economy and to our families and communities is staggering.

The Cost of Untreated Mental Health

- The *direct* cost of treating and supporting mental illness is approximately \$55 billion a year.
- The *indirect* costs to society include the cost of lost employment or decreased productivity, accidents, and social welfare programs, which have been estimated at \$273 billion a year.
- About \$70 billion of that \$273 billion is the estimated cost of untreated mental illness -- more than the direct cost of treating mental illness. Included in the \$70 billion are:
 - The added cost of emergency room care. Individuals with untreated mental illness tend to use emergency rooms on a regular basis to deal with medical crises.
 - Added costs of care by private physicians. Many mental illness symptoms are physical, but family doctors often refer these patients for more costly tests. In addition, untreated mental illness actually causes some medical conditions to worsen, such as asthma, arthritis, and diabetes, which require even more visits to private physicians.
 - Absenteeism, where lost days from work create a financial drain on employers.
 - "Presenteeism," which refers to employees who show up for work but, because they're impaired with a mental illness such as depression, cannot work up to their ability.

School and Mental Health Statistics

- The figures usually indicated for diagnosable mental disorders suggest that between 12% and 22% of all youngsters under age 18 are in need of services for mental, emotional, or behavioral health issues.
- Nearly 80% of these won't receive counseling, therapy, or medication.
- When a child is struggling with mental health it is harder to learn.

The Cost of Untreated Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

- The estimated yearly economic impact of SUDs is \$249 billion for alcohol and \$193 billion for illicit drugs. This includes costs related to crime, work productivity and healthcare.
- Drinking accounts for as much as one third of all accidental deaths.
- Nearly 88,000 people die from alcohol-related causes annually.
- In 2014, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for 31 percent of driving fatalities.
- More than 10 percent of U.S. children live with a parent with alcohol problems.
- Many more people now die from alcohol and drug overdose each year than are killed in automobile accidents

- In 2014, nearly 30,000 people died due to an overdose on heroin or prescription opioids.
- An additional roughly 20,000 people died as a result of an unintentional overdose of alcohol, cocaine, or non-opioid prescription drugs.
- An estimated 12% of children in this country live with a parent who is dependent on or has SUD.
- The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) estimates that 61% of infants and 41% of older children in out-of-home care are from families with active SUDs.
- For almost 31% of all children placed in foster care in 2012, parental alcohol or drug use was the documented reason for removal, and in several states that percentage surpassed 60%.

What is Stigma?

- Stigma is the pre-determined attitudes or beliefs, regarding an individual or a group, which disempower or devalue that individual or group and undermine relationships with them.
- Often used synonyms for stigma are “degrading,” “label,” “stereotype,” “devaluing,” “isolating,” “distorted perception,” insensitive,” judgmental,” and “belittling.”

What is the Impact When We Stigmatize Someone Who Has a Behavioral Health Issue?

Stigmatizing people fosters “The “3 Ds”



Source: Harm Reduction Coalition

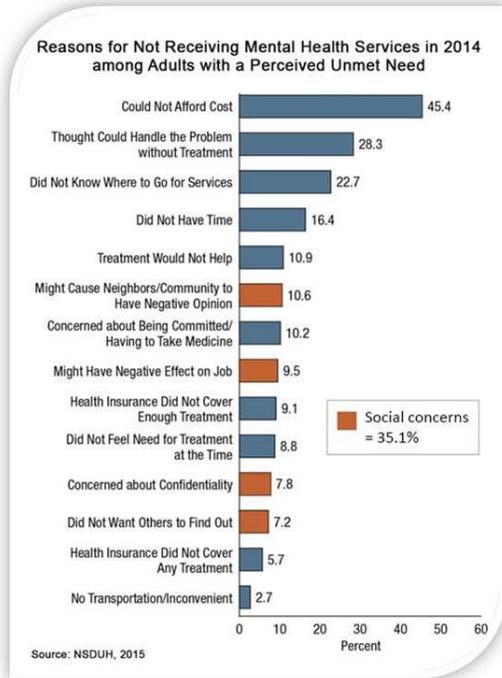
Stigmatizing creates a negative reinforcement cycle:



Source: Harm Reduction Coalition

Ultimately, stigmatizing people who have a behavioral health issue prevents people from seeking help to improve their health, leading to ongoing costs and pain to our families and communities.

How Common is Stigma as a Reason Why People Do Not Seek Help?



Actions to Use to Stop Stigmatizing

- Change my language:

Stigmatizing Language	Affirming Language
Addict / Junkie / Abuser / Alcoholic / Drunk / Alkie	Individual with Substance Use Disorder or Individual with Substance Dependence
Mentally ill / Psycho / Lunatic/Crazy	Person with mental health condition / challenges
He / She is staying clean	He / She is maintaining recovery
He / She is Bi-Polar	He / She is diagnosed with Bi-Polar Disorder
He / She is a mental health patient	He / She is receiving mental health services

- Change my beliefs and actions:
 - Do I consider the behavioral health issue to be the person's fault? *Challenge this incorrect belief.*
 - Is my tone of voice affirming and empathetic or critical and judging toward people who have a behavioral health issue? *Be aware and intentional and avoid doing so.*
 - When interacting with someone who has a behavioral health issue, is my body language open and welcoming or closed off and distancing? *Be aware and intentional and avoid doing so.*
 - Am I fearful or anxious about the person's behavioral health condition? *Challenge these emotions.*

Resources

To get confidential help now for mental health or substance use concerns, contact:

- 2-1-1 Maryland: 211 or 1-866-411-6803
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255
- Maryland Crisis Hotline: 1-800-422-0009

Bibliography

Harmreduction.org. (2010). Understanding Drug-Related Stigma - Harm Reduction Coalition. [online] Available at: <https://harmreduction.org/issue-area/issue-drugs-drug-users/understanding-drug-related-stigma/> [Accessed 3 Mar. 2018].