Breaking the Silence, raising awareness& reducing Stigma Around SUD& Mental Health

Dr. Summayya

Understanding Mental Health and Substance Use

Understanding SUD and Mental Health

OVERVIEW

Impact on millions globally

Substance use disorder (SUD) and mental health challenges affect millions, influencing their lives in various settings.

Stigma limits help-seeking

Stigma and misconceptions surrounding SUD and mental health often prevent individuals from seeking vital help.

Need for increased awareness

There is critical need for awareness and understanding of these intertwined issues.
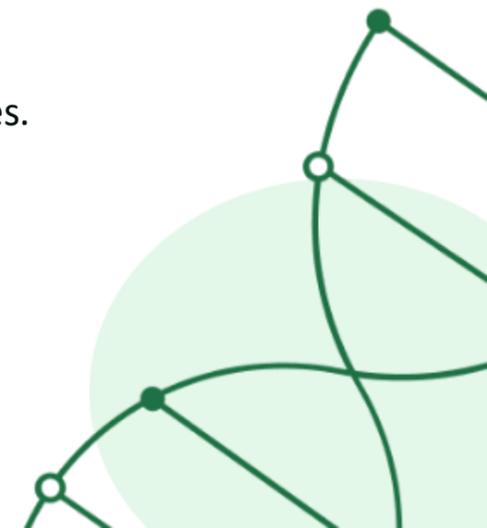
Understanding SUD and Mental Health

OVERVIEW

Impact on millions in Pakistan

Approximately 6.7 million people use drugs in Pakistan, with nearly 2 million classified as addicts.

Asia

Alcohol use disorder is the most prevalent SUD, with a 13% prevalence rate, lower than the Global average of 32.5%,

2022: 49 million with SUDs

In 2022, approximately 49 million individuals were reported to have Substance Use Disorders, indicating a significant public health issue. (WHO) highlights that 2.6 million deaths per year were attributable to alcohol consumption(WHO,2024)

Myth vs Facts

Myth

1. Addiction is a choice.

2. People with SUDs just lack willpower or moral strength.

3. You have to hit "rock bottom" to get help.

4. Treatment doesn't work; relapse means failure.

5. Only illegal drugs are dangerous or addictive.

6. MAT is just replacing one drug with another.

7. Addiction only affects "certain types" of people.

8. Detox is enough to recover from addiction.

9. People with SUDs are criminals.

10. If treatment didn't work once, it never will.

Fact

Addiction is a complex brain disorder that changes brain function and behavior, not a matter of choice.

SUDs involve genetic, psychological, environmental, and social factors—not just willpower.

Early intervention is more effective; treatment is beneficial at any stage.

Relapse can be part of recovery; it signals that treatment may need adjustment, not that it has failed.

Legal substances like alcohol, nicotine, and prescription medications can also be highly addictive.

Medication-Assisted Treatment helps stabilize brain chemistry and supports recovery.

Anyone can develop a substance use disorder, regardless of background.

Detox is only the first step; ongoing therapy and support are essential for recovery.

Addiction is a medical condition, not a moral failing or crime.

Recovery often involves multiple attempts; persistence and tailored care are key.

OBJECTIVES
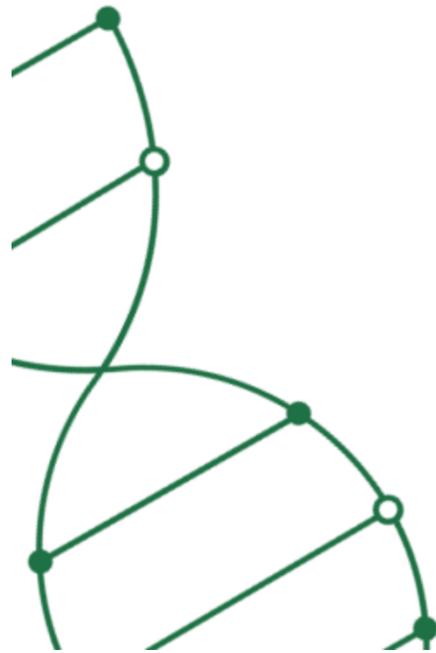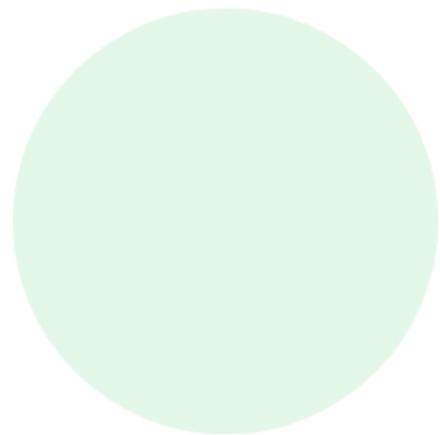
1 **The basics of substance use disorders**

Gain foundational knowledge about substance use disorders and their impact on mental health.

2 **Misconceptions and stigma**

Recognize common misconceptions surrounding mental health and the stigma associated with it.

3 **Strategies to reduce stigma effectively**

Actionable strategies to mitigate stigma and enhance community awareness.

4 **Educational tools for support**

Investigate effective educational tools that foster empathy and provide support for those affected.

Understanding Substance Use Disorders
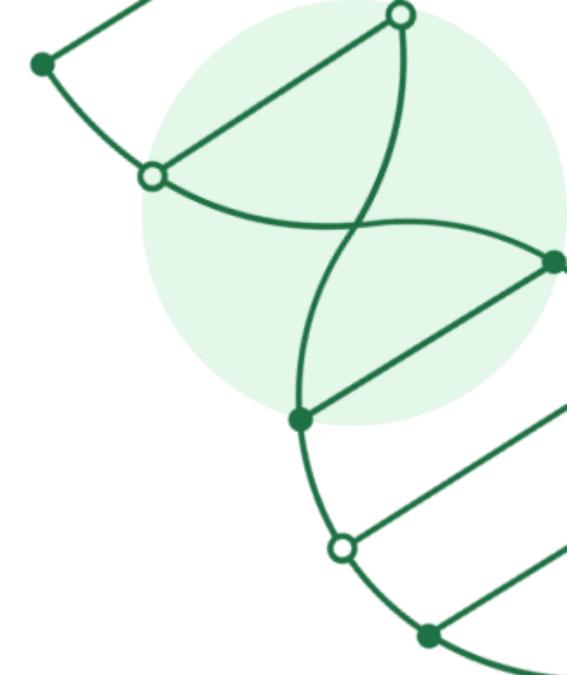
Nature of SUDs

Substance use disorders are chronic, treatable diseases that significantly impair an individual's life, affecting their emotional and physical well-being.

Stigma

Stigma refers to a set of negative beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors directed toward individuals or groups based on certain characteristics, conditions, or experiences.

Mental Health

A state of well-being in which an individual realizes their abilities, can cope with stress, and contribute to the community (WHO,2022).
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Significant Impairment

The problematic use of substances leads to notable distress and functional impairment, impacting relationships, work, and health.

Global Substance Use Disorder Statistics (2019–2023)

2019	56.7 million people with drug use disorders.	Drug use disorders accounted for 128,000 deaths globally.
2020	284 million people used drugs; 11.2 million injected drugs.	Cannabis was the most used drug; significant increase in amphetamine use.
2021-2022	296 million people used drugs; 39.5 million had drug use disorders.	Opioid users numbered around 60 million globally.
2023-2024	48.5 million people aged 12 or older had an SUD in the past year.	Includes 28.9 million with alcohol use disorder and 27.2 million with drug use disorder.
2022-2024	2.6 million deaths per year were attributable to alcohol consumption, accounting for 4.7% of all deaths globally.	National Drug Use Survey launched to update data on drug use patterns.

Understanding Co-occurring Disorders

Exploring the intersection of substance use and mental health disorders
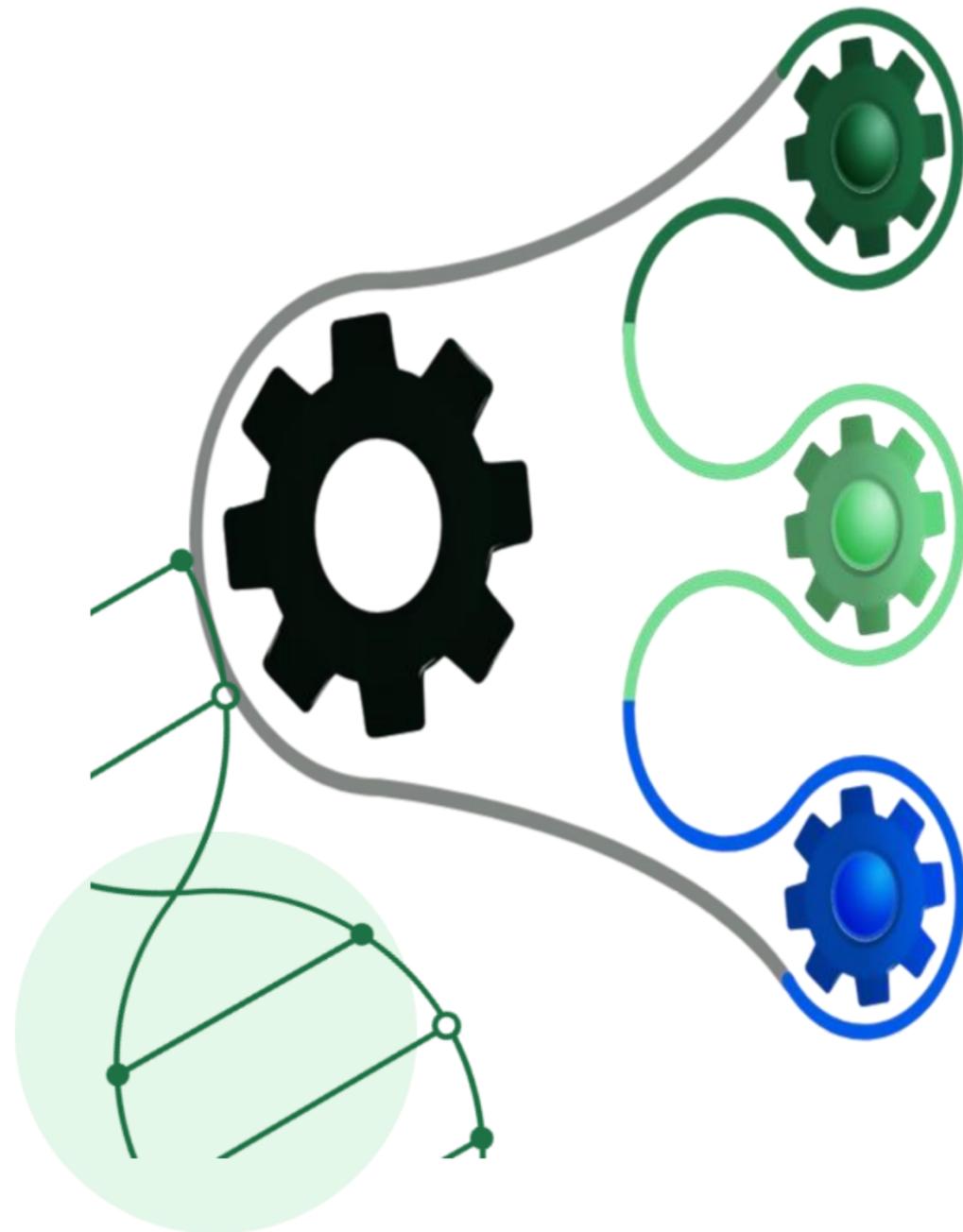
Mental Health Disorder	Commonly Associated Substances
Depression	Alcohol, cannabis, opioids
Anxiety Disorders	Benzodiazepines, alcohol, stimulants
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Alcohol, cannabis, stimulants
Bipolar Disorder	Alcohol, cocaine, amphetamines
Schizophrenia	Cannabis, tobacco, stimulants

Understanding Stigma's Impact on Individuals

Exploring how stigma affects access to help and treatment for SUDs and mental health issues
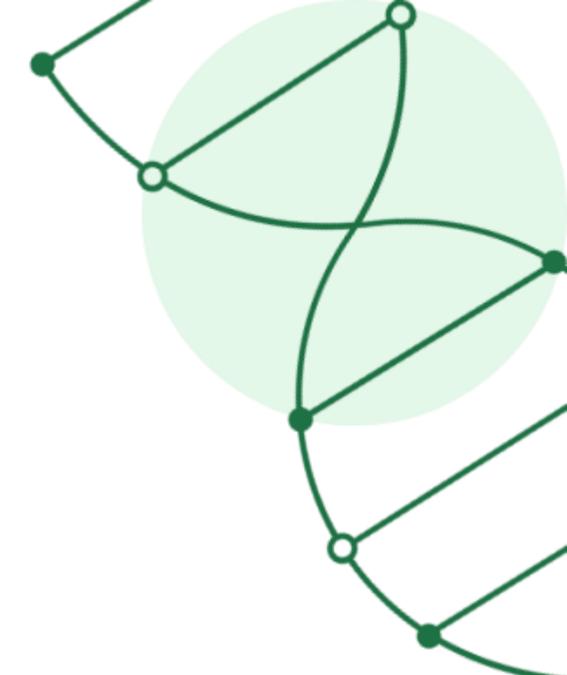
Stigma creates shame

Individuals may feel embarrassed about their struggles with Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) or mental health issues, leading to internalized shame.

Types

Public Stigma: Stereotypes held by society (calling someone an "addict" or "crazy" Nashaee).

Self-Stigma: When individuals internalize these labels and start to feel shame or hopelessness.

•**Institutional Stigma:** Discrimination in healthcare, education, employment, or the legal system.

Consequences of Stigma: Reluctance to seek help. Stigmatization can discourage people from reaching out for help, delaying treatment and worsening their condition.

Isolation from support

The fear of judgment can lead to social isolation, causing individuals to withdraw from friends and family when they need support the most.

Exacerbation of challenges

The impact of stigma often makes existing challenges more difficult, creating a cycle that is hard to break without external support.

Impact of Stigma on Communities

Exploring the consequences of stigma on health and social stability
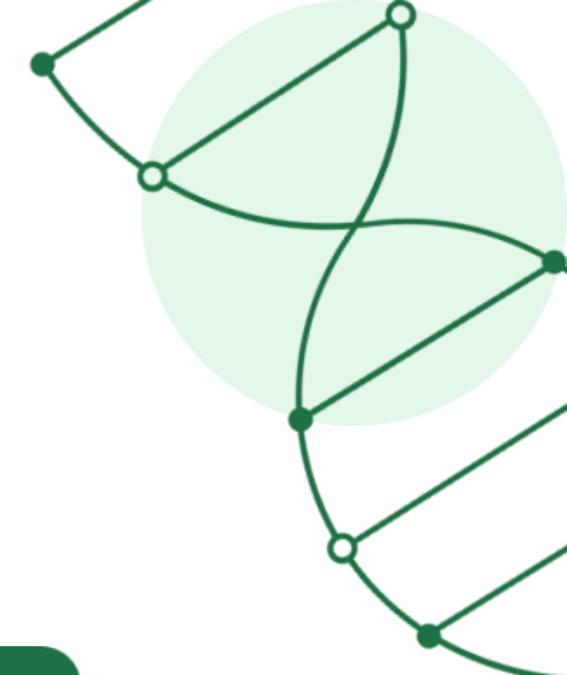
Healthcare access barriers

Communities affected by stigma face significant obstacles in accessing necessary healthcare and support services, impacting overall community health.

Higher untreated SUD rates

Stigmatized communities often experience increased rates of untreated substance use disorders (SUDs), leading to more severe health outcomes.

Increased mental health issues

The presence of stigma contributes to a rise in mental health issues among community members, exacerbating existing problems.

Social problems escalation

Stigma can lead to associated social problems such as unemployment and homelessness, creating a cycle of disadvantage in affected communities.
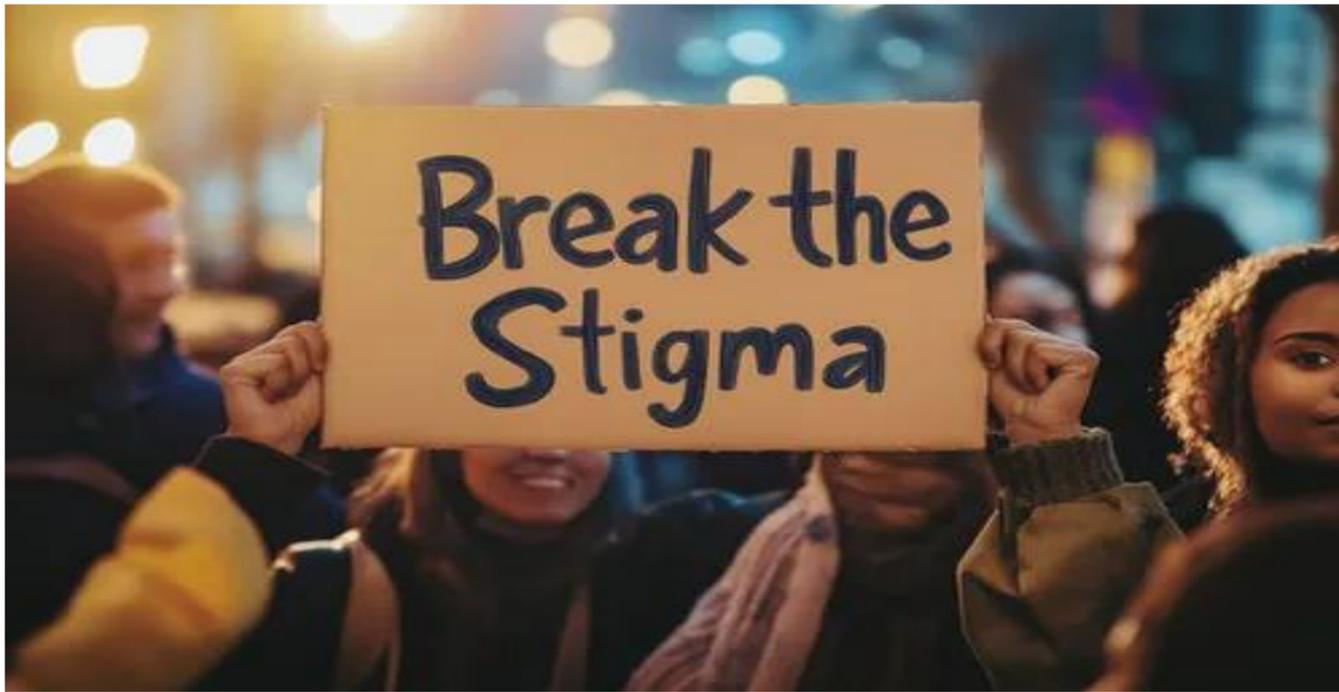
Breaking the Silence on SUDs& Mental Health
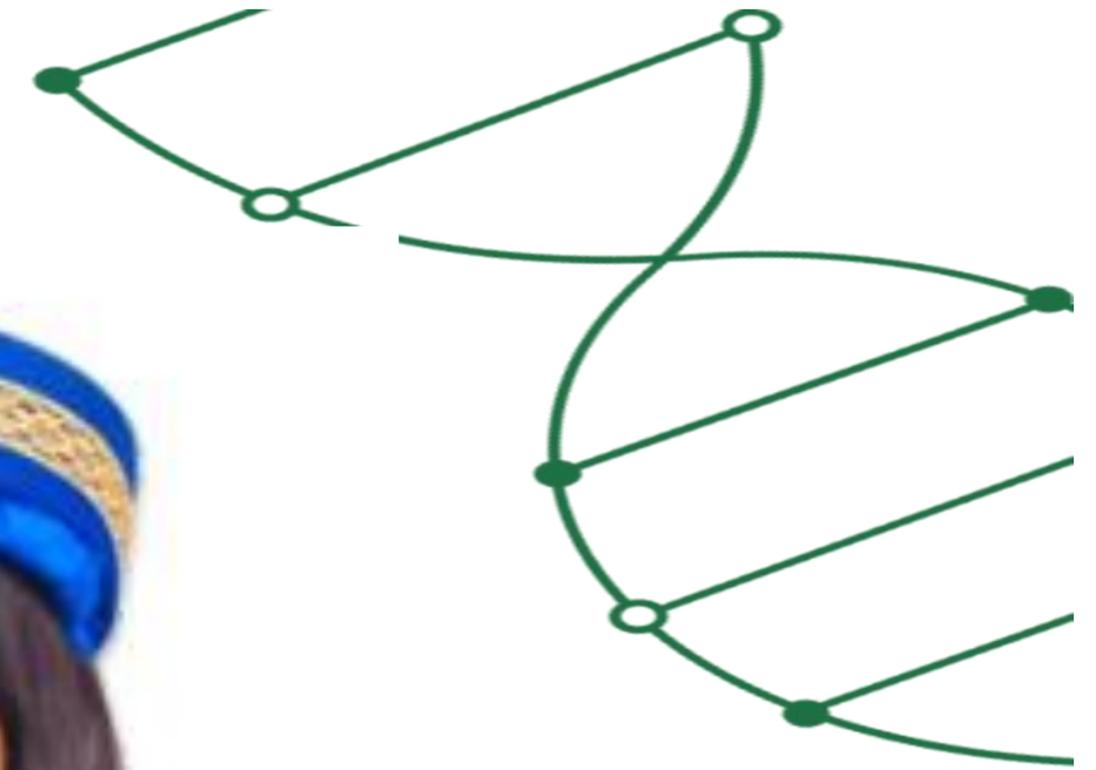
Dr Shammem Akhtar
Assistant Professor (ICP,UMT Sialkot)

Breaking the Silence on SUDs

"Let's start talking openly about substance use disorders instead of hiding them or staying silent because of stigma, shame, or cultural pressure.".

Use person-first language

Referring to individuals as 'person with a substance use disorder' emphasizes their humanity and dignity.

Reframe negative terms

Replacing derogatory terms reduces stigma and encourages open conversations about recovery and support.

Highlight potential for recovery

By focusing on recovery, we promote hope and encourage individuals to seek help without fear of judgment.

Educate communities

Raising awareness on the impact of language can help shift societal perceptions and foster supportive environments.

1.Awareness and Stigma in Mental Health

Strategies to combat stigma surrounding mental health and substance use disorders
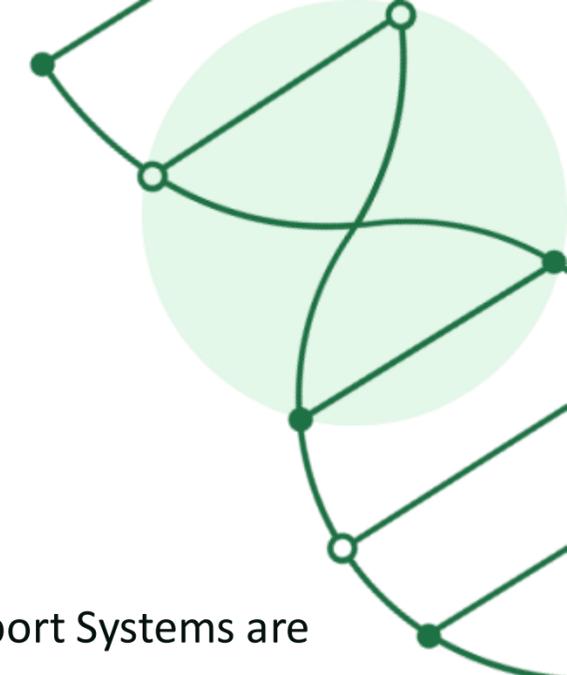
Importance of Raising Awareness

Raising awareness about mental health and substance use disorders can lead to better understanding and support for those affected.

Understanding Stigma

Stigma surrounding mental health and substance use can prevent individuals from seeking help, exacerbating their conditions.

Promoting Open Conversations

Encouraging open conversations about mental health can help dismantle barriers and foster a more supportive environment.

Education and Training Programs

Implementing education and training programs can equip individuals with knowledge to recognize and address mental health issues.

Support Systems are Essential

Establishing strong support systems in communities can provide individuals with the necessary resources to seek help.

2.Empathy-Driven Curriculum Design

Fostering understanding and advocacy in education
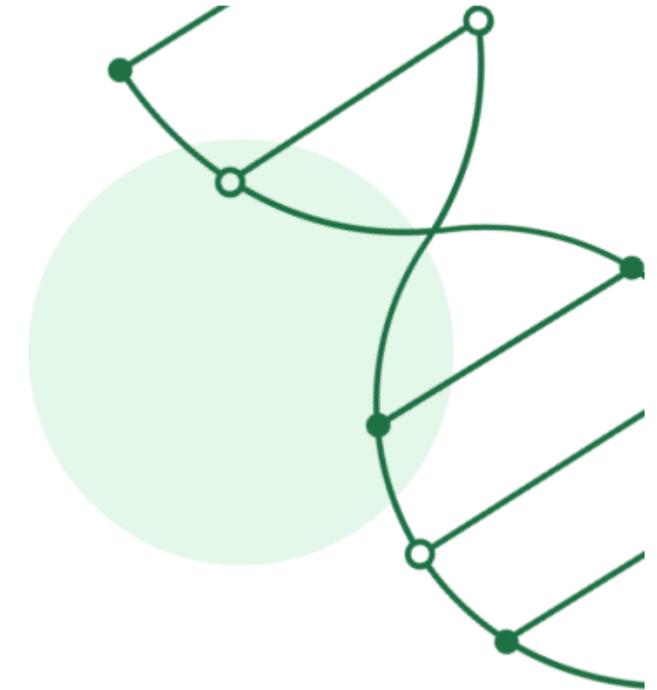
1 Incorporate personal stories

Utilizing real-life narratives helps clients connect emotionally and understand diverse perspectives.

2 Use interactive activities

Engaging students, and people through hands-on learning fosters deeper understanding and retention of information about SUDs and mental health.

3 Provide up-to-date information

Curriculums should include the latest research and resources on substance use disorders (SUDs) to ensure relevance and accuracy.

4 Encourage advocacy for change

Empathy-driven education empowers students to become champions for mental health awareness and stigma reduction.

3.Engaging Students Through Interaction

Utilizing role-playing and discussions to foster understanding of SUDs and mental health.

Role-Playing Activities

Role-playing allows students to step into different perspectives, enhancing their understanding of Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) and mental health issues.

Group Discussions

Facilitating group discussions encourages students to share thoughts, promoting critical thinking and empathy towards those affected by mental health challenges.

Critical Thinking Skills

Interactive activities stimulate critical thinking, pushing students to analyze and evaluate complex situations related to SUDs.

Empathy Development

Through engagement in interactive tasks, students develop a deeper empathy for individuals experiencing mental health struggles.

4.Fostering Supportive Environments

Creating safe spaces for discussing substance use and mental health

■ Develop supportive policies

Establish clear guidelines that promote understanding, respect, and support for individuals facing substance use disorders and mental health challenges.

■ Train staff effectively

Provide comprehensive training for educators and staff to recognize signs of substance use disorders and mental health issues, enhancing their ability to help students.

■ Encourage open communication

Create an environment that allows students to express their concerns and seek help without fear of judgment, reducing the stigma associated with mental health.

■ Reduce stigma through awareness

Implement campaigns that educate the school community about substance use disorders and mental health, promoting empathy and understanding.

■ Promote safety and confidentiality

Ensure that discussions around substance use and mental health are treated with privacy and respect, fostering a sense of security for individuals seeking help.
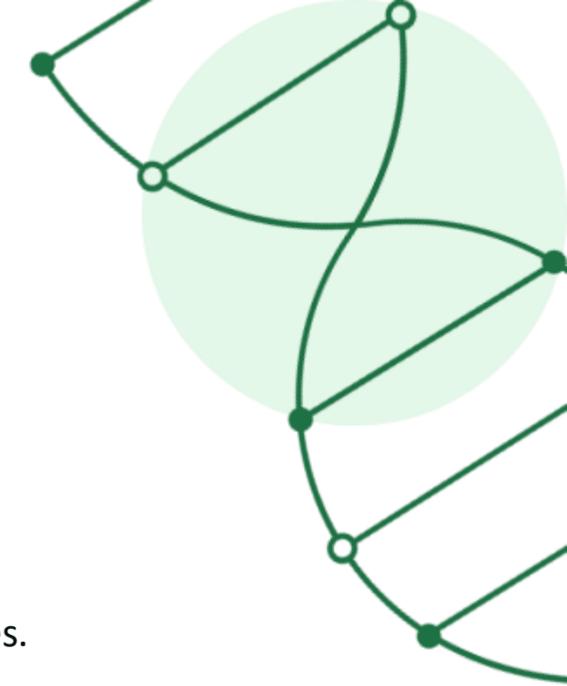
5.Community Support Strategies

Unifying efforts to reduce stigma

Community involvement is essential

Engagement of local organizations and leaders can significantly reduce stigma surrounding substance use disorders (SUDs) and mental health issues.

Collaborative support systems

Encouraging collaboration among healthcare providers, local organizations, and community leaders fosters a comprehensive support system for affected individuals.

Unified approach benefits all

A coordinated effort creates a more effective support network, improving outcomes for individuals struggling with SUDs and mental health

Reducing stigma through education

Educational initiatives can help dispel myths surrounding SUDs and mental health, promoting understanding and empathy within the community.

Empowering community leaders

Training and empowering community leaders to address SUDs and mental health issues can enhance local responses and support mechanisms.

Metrics for Measuring Impact PLANINGS

Evaluating Awareness and Stigma Reduction

Assessing Awareness Levels

Conduct surveys to measure changes in community understanding regarding substance use and mental health.

Evaluating Stigma Reduction

Gather feedback from community members and educational settings to assess stigma changes.

1.Enhancing Education Through Feedback

Promoting better strategies for mental health and substance use awareness through continuous feedback and improvement.

Importance of Feedback

Gathering feedback from participants and stakeholders is essential for identifying strengths and areas for enhancement in educational approaches.

Regular Updates

Consistently updating content and methods helps ensure that educational strategies remain effective and aligned with current needs and challenges.

Adaptation to New Insights

Adapting based on new insights from stakeholders fosters a responsive educational environment that meets participants' evolving needs.
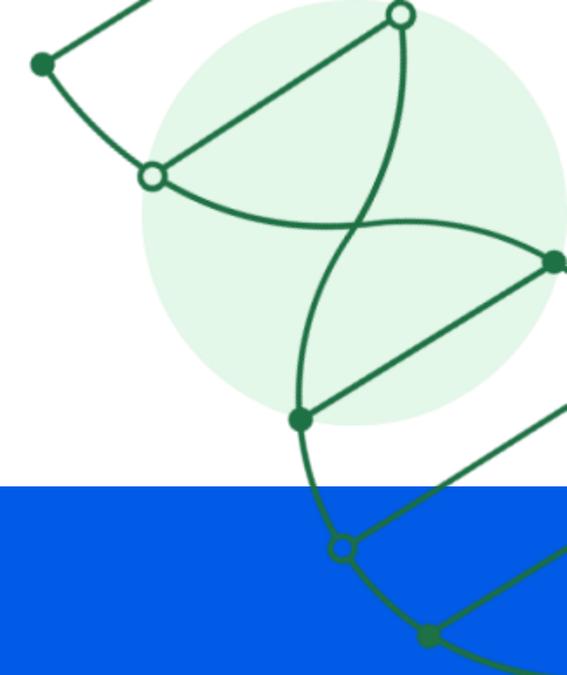
2.Resources for Learning More

Explore valuable resources to enhance understanding of SUDs and mental health support.
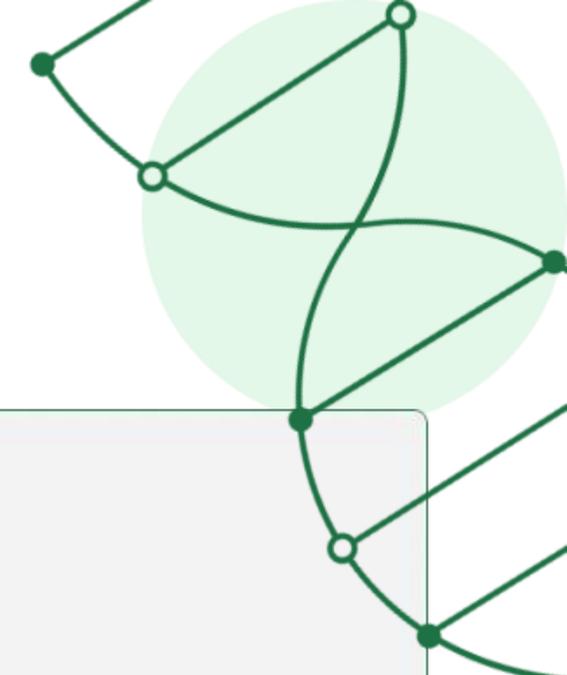
Organizations

| SAMHSA | CDC | NAMI | APA |

Support Networks

| Local Support Groups | Online Forums | Hotlines | Workshops |

3.Community Program Success

Innovative Approaches to Engagement

1 Community Education Initiatives

Programs designed to educate the public about substance use disorders (SUDs) and mental health issues, which can lead to greater understanding and reduced stigma.

2 Peer Support Networks

Establishment of peer support groups that provide emotional and practical support, helping individuals to feel less isolated and more empowered in their recovery journey.

3 Collaboration with Local Organizations

Successful programs often partner with local nonprofits, schools, and health agencies to broaden outreach and effectiveness in addressing community needs.

4 Awareness Campaigns

Strategic campaigns aimed at raising awareness and encouraging open conversations about mental health and SUDs, fostering a more accepting community.

5 Training for First Responders

Providing specialized training to first responders on how to handle mental health crises and substance use situations effectively and compassionately.

6 Integration of Services

Programs that integrate mental health and substance use services to provide holistic support for individuals facing both challenges.

4.Empathy Through Storytelling: A Path to Understanding

Using personal stories to foster empathy and reduce stigma in communities
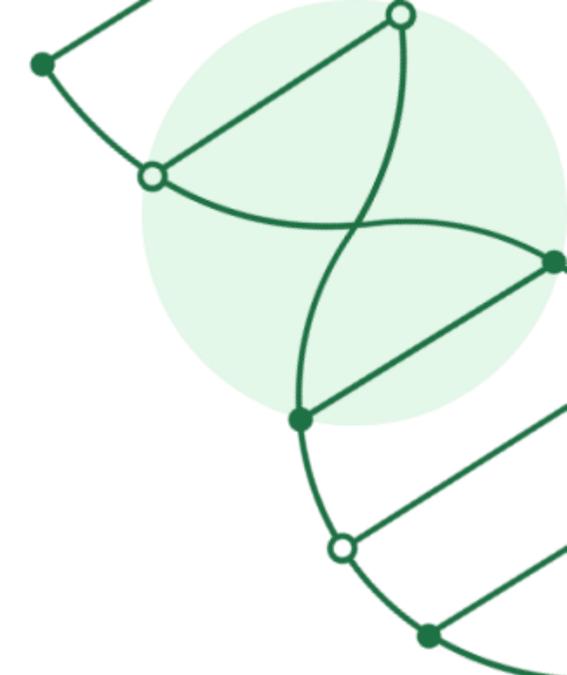
1

Powerful impact of storytelling

Sharing personal stories can shift perceptions and create a deeper connection between individuals, promoting empathy within the community.

2

Empowering lived experiences

Encourage individuals with experiences of substance use disorder or mental health challenges to share their journeys, which can help others understand their struggles.

3

Reducing stigma through narratives

Personal narratives challenge stereotypes and reduce stigma, leading to more supportive environments for those affected by mental health issues.

4

Fostering community understanding

By listening to personal stories, community members can develop a more compassionate view towards substance use and mental health issues.

5.Bridging Knowledge and Action for Change

Effective stigma reduction requires translating awareness into meaningful support and interventions.
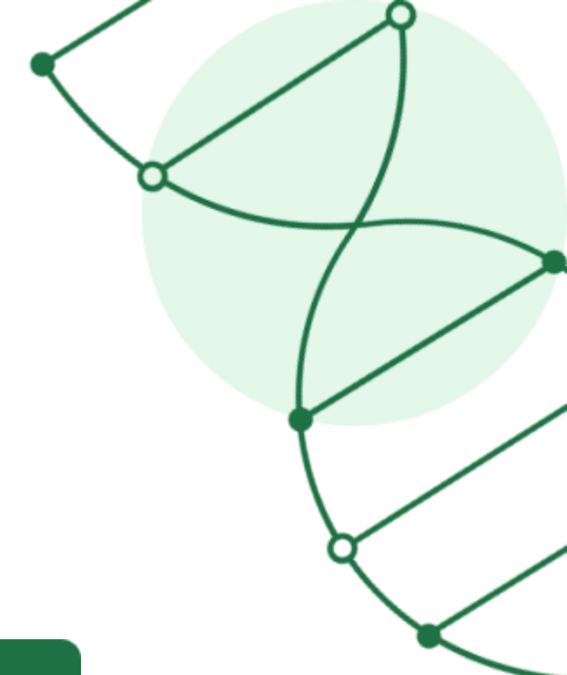
Closing the gap in awareness

Creating a seamless transition from knowledge to action is vital for impactful stigma reduction efforts.

Practical support is essential

Providing practical solutions and resources ensures that individuals with SUDs and mental health issues receive necessary care.

Translating awareness into actions

Turning awareness into interventions helps in addressing the stigma surrounding mental health and substance use effectively.

Understanding individual needs

Recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals with SUDs is crucial for effective support.

6.Policies to Combat Stigma in SUD

Understanding how effective policies can lead to better mental health and reduced stigma.
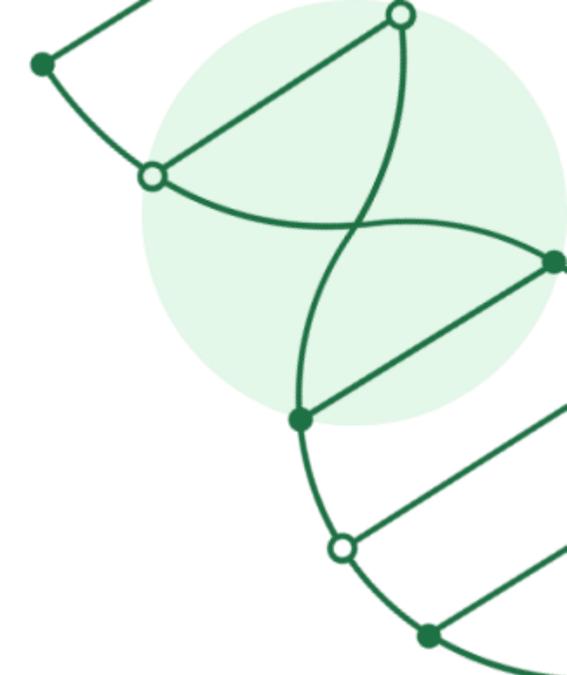
Promote health equity

Implementing policies that ensure equal access to health care services for all individuals, particularly those affected by substance use disorder and mental health issues.

Increase funding for community programs

Allocating financial resources to community-based initiatives that provide support and treatment for individuals dealing with substance use disorder and related stigma.

Advocate for legislative changes

Supporting laws and regulations that enhance mental health services and promote understanding to effectively reduce stigma surrounding these issues.

7.Policy Impact on Stigma

Effective strategies for stigma reduction
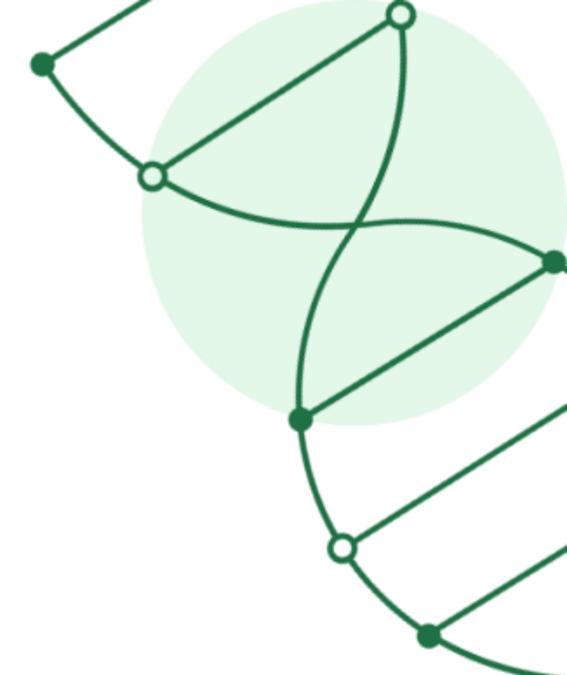
Successful policy interventions

Identify case studies where policies have led to stigma reduction for individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) and mental health issues.

Systemic improvements in equity

Discuss how policy changes can foster health equity and enhance access to care for marginalized populations.

Long-term outcomes for individuals

Examine the positive effects of these policies on individual outcomes, including recovery rates and overall well-being.

Community engagement in policy

Highlight the importance of community involvement in shaping effective policy that addresses stigma at local levels.

8.Implementing Effective Change

Practical Steps for Community Engagement and Support

Understand Local Contexts

Recognizing the unique factors that influence the community's needs and challenges related to substance use disorders (SUDs) and mental health issues is crucial for effective change implementation.

Provide Support Systems

Implementing support systems for individuals struggling with SUDs and mental health issues is essential for fostering recovery and resilience within the community.

Encourage Open Dialogue

Creating safe spaces for conversations about substance use disorders and mental health can help reduce stigma and promote understanding among community members.
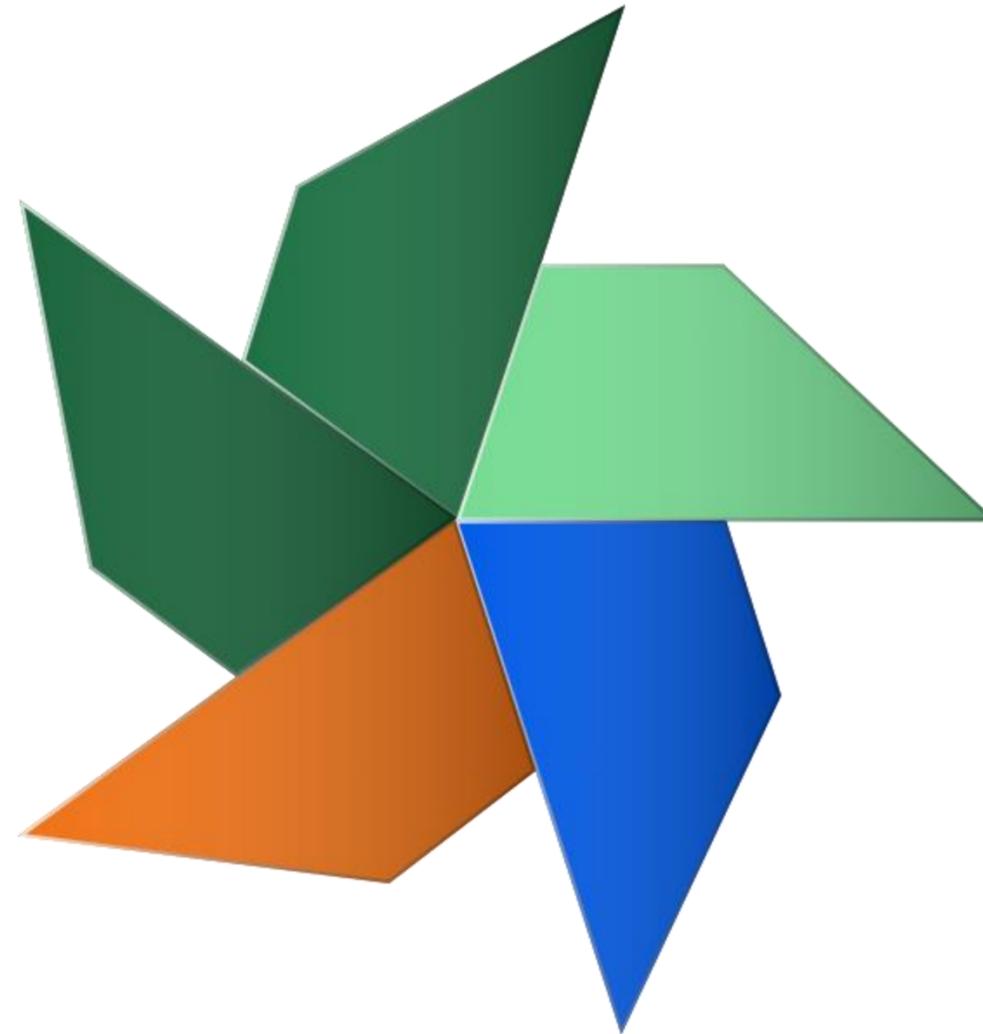
Foster Community Involvement

Encouraging participation from community members in discussions and initiatives helps build trust and ensures that solutions are relevant and effective for those affected by SUDs and mental health challenges.

Leverage Available Resources

Identifying and utilizing existing community resources, such as local organizations and support networks, can enhance the implementation of initiatives aimed at raising awareness and reducing stigma.
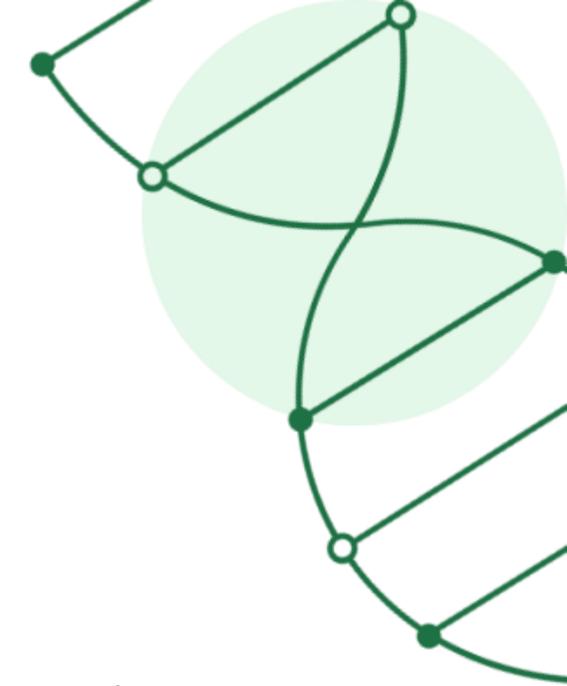
Challenges in Reducing Stigma

Addressing societal norms and beliefs to promote understanding and acceptance

1.Deeply rooted beliefs hinder progress

Stigma is often based on long-standing societal beliefs that can be difficult to change, requiring sustained effort and education.

2.Lack of awareness and education

Many people are unaware of mental health and substance use issues, making education a key strategy in stigma reduction efforts.

3.Community engagement is essential

Engaging communities in discussions about stigma can help to foster understanding and support for affected individuals.

4.Persistence is key in overcoming challenges

Reducing stigma requires ongoing commitment and perseverance, as changing perceptions takes time and consistent effort.

Advancing Awareness and Reducing Stigma

Fostering community understanding and support to combat stigma surrounding substance use disorders and mental health issues.
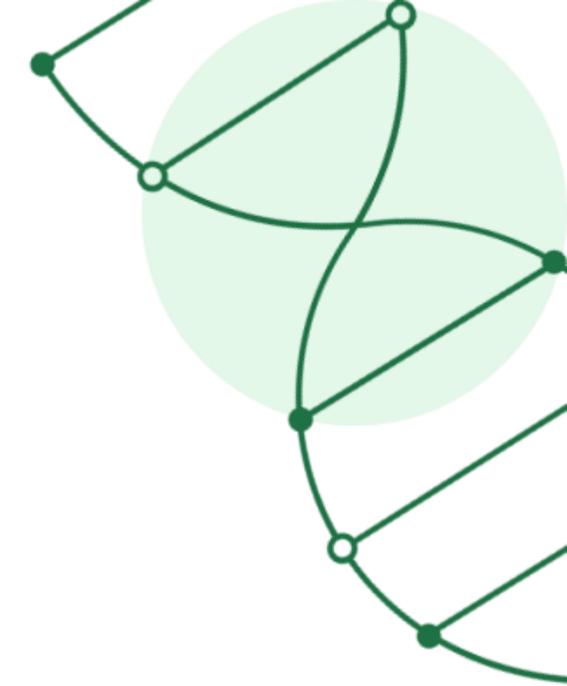
1   Expand Education Initiatives

Enhancing education programs to raise awareness about substance use disorders and mental health issues is essential for community engagement.

2   Advocate for Policy Changes

Promoting policy changes that support individuals with SUDs and mental health challenges can lead to better resources and treatment options.

3   Strengthen Community Support Systems

Building robust community support systems can help reduce stigma and improve outcomes for those affected by these issues.

4   Reduce Stigma Through Awareness

Creating awareness campaigns to challenge and reduce the stigma associated with substance use disorders and mental health issues is crucial (https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/stigma-and-discrimination).

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