

# Our Words Matter

We can improve access and outcomes for those with mental health concerns.

On average, a person waits **8-10 years** from the onset of their mental health symptoms before receiving treatment. A common barrier is **stigma**.

## Let's change the way we talk about addiction and mental health.



### People-first language

...does not define a person by their condition.

...prevents a "them" and "us" mentality.



### Medical language

...recognizes that many factors contribute to addiction and mental health.

...rejects the idea that mental health issues are due to lack of willpower or character flaws.



### Recovery language

...is optimistic about a person's ability to change.

...respects a person's right to make their own choices.

### Instead of this...

### ...Say this

Addict, Junkie, User, Drug abuser (X)	Person who uses substances/drugs, Person with the disease of addiction (✓)
Former drug addict (X)	Person in long-term recovery, Person with lived experience (✓)
Relapse (X)	Return to use, Have a setback, Recovery interruption (✓)
Dirty/clean drug screen (X)	Positive/negative drug screen (✓)
Drug abuse (X)	Drug use (✓)
Drug overdose (X)	Drug poisoning (✓)
Unsuccessful suicide, Failed suicide (X)	Suicide attempt (✓)
Committed suicide (X)	Died by suicide (✓)
Schizophrenic, Anorexic (X)	Person who lives with schizophrenia/anorexia (✓)
Noncompliant, Unmotivated (X)	Chooses not to, Unaware, Experiences barriers with treatment (✓)

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