
American Pharmacists Association
House of Delegates – March 22-25, 2024

NEW BUSINESS

(To be submitted and introduced by Delegates only)

Introduced by: Molly Nichols (APhA-APPM PPCA SIG)
(Name)

January 22 APhA-APPM, on behalf of the Pain, Palliative Care and Addiction SIG
(Date) (Organization)

Subject: Removal of Stigmatizing Language

Motion: To adopt the following policy statement as amended and part of the existing 2019, 2016
Substance Use Disorder policy

2019, 2016 Substance Use Disorder

1. APhA supports legislative, regulatory, and private sector efforts that include pharmacists' input and that will balance patient/consumers' need for access to medications for legitimate medical purposes with the need to prevent the diversion and use of medications in a manner other than prescribed, misuse, and abuse of medications.

Background:

The language in these policies was reviewed and updated based on the APhA Pharmacists' Role in Reducing Stigma Surrounding Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) fact sheet (link [here](#)). The goal of this NBI is to update potentially stigmatizing language in existing APhA policies to reflect currently recommend language in OUD and, more broadly, substance use disorders (SUDs). The SIG hopes that by revising this policy language we will reduce indirect exposures to, and influences of, stigma in the profession.

Impacts of Stigma (pulled from <https://nida.nih.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/health-professions-education/words-matter-terms-to-use-avoid-when-talking-about-addiction>)

- Feeling stigmatized can reduce the willingness of individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) to seek treatment.
- Stigmatizing views of people with SUD are common; this stereotyping can lead others to feel pity, fear, anger, and a desire for social distance from people with an SUD.
- Stigmatizing language can negatively influence health care provider perceptions of people with SUD, which can impact the care they provide.

Importance of Eliminating Stigma (pulled from <https://www.shatterproof.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/Shatterproof%20Addiction%20Stigma%20Index%202021%20Report%20NEW.pdf>)

- Eliminating the stigma and discrimination faced by those with SUDs has never been more important. Despite decades of action from nonprofits, healthcare providers, those with lived experience, and government agencies, stigma remains one of the largest and most persistent drivers of negative outcomes for those struggling with addiction.
- During 2020 alone, more than 93,000 people died from overdoses – the highest number in history. At the same time, more than 20 million American adults continued to suffer from the disease of addiction.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this crisis by increasing economic instability, imposing social isolation, and reducing access to harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services. Structural racism and health inequities have worsened the impacts of the pandemic for marginalized communities, leading to increased rates of substance use and overdose. These effects will be felt for years to come, highlighting the urgent need to act.
- Addiction stigma and discrimination experienced by those with a substance use disorder independently leads to tens of thousands of preventable deaths every single year:
 - It prevents many with a SUD from ever seeking treatment;
 - It makes the public less willing to have someone with a SUD as a close personal friend, a co- worker, a neighbor, and as a family member;
 - It limits the ability of institutions and providers to offer help when someone does seek assistance by limiting resources and perpetuating harmful policies;
 - And it fuels an ongoing feeling of shame that serves as an obstacle to long-term health for those with a SUD, regardless of whether they have received treatment – entrenching addiction as a relentless and devastating public health crisis.

Current APhA Policy & Bylaws:

2019, 2016 Substance Use Disorder

1. APhA supports legislative, regulatory, and private sector efforts that include pharmacists' input and that will balance patient/consumers' need for access to medications for legitimate medical purposes with the need to prevent the diversion.
2. APhA supports consumer sales limits of nonprescription drug products, such as methamphetamine precursors, that may be illegally converted into drugs for illicit use.

3. APhA encourages education of all personnel involved in the distribution chain of nonprescription products so they understand the potential for certain products, such as methamphetamine precursors, to be illegally converted into drugs for illicit use. APhA supports comprehensive substance use disorder education, prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.
 4. APhA supports public and private initiatives to fund treatment and prevention of substance use disorders.
 5. APhA supports stringent enforcement of criminal laws against individuals who engage in drug trafficking.
- (JAPhA. 56(4):369; July/August 2016) (JAPhA. 59(4): e28; July/August 2019)

Efforts to Reduce the Stigma Associated with Mental Health Disorders or Diseases 2018

1. APhA encourages all stakeholders to develop and adopt evidence-based approaches to educate the public and all health care professionals to reduce the stigma associated with mental health diagnoses.
 2. APhA supports the increased utilization of pharmacists and student pharmacists with appropriate training to actively participate in the care of patients with mental health diagnoses as members of interprofessional health care teams in all practice settings.
 3. APhA supports the expansion of mental health education and training in the curriculum of all schools and colleges of pharmacy, post-graduate training, and within continuing professional development programs.
 4. APhA supports the development of education and resources to address health care professional resiliency and burnout.
- (JAPhA. 58(4):356; July/August 2018)

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