LANGUAGE MATTERS

BI-STATE PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION MEMBER MEETING 6/14/16
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FAR REACHING IMPACT

More from the Eye of the Storm

- One person dies from a drug overdose every day in NH
- 654 ER Visits in 2013
- 1,115 ER Visits in 2014
- 1,921 Narcan by EMS in 2013
- 1,050 Narcan by EMS in 2014

The # of heroin-related ED visits during the 1st 8 months of 2015 is 76% greater than during the same 8 month time period in 2014.
Stigma & Language
What Are We Up Against

• Language Matters
• Disease Of Shame, Loss, Remorse
• Limited Help, And Significant Barriers
Words matter

The words we use to describe drug and alcohol use disorders contribute to stigma around the conditions, psychologist John F. Kelly told attendees at a recent White House Conference on Drug Policy Reform.
Does It Really Matter?

“Substance Abuser”
Mr. Williams is a substance abuser and is attending a treatment program through the court. As part of the program Mr. Williams is required to remain abstinent from alcohol and other drugs. He has been compliant with program requirements, until one month ago, when he was found to have two positive urine toxicology screens which revealed drug use and a breathalyzer reading which revealed alcohol consumption. Within the past month there was a further urine toxicology screen revealing drug use. Mr. Williams has been a substance abuser for the past few years. He now awaits his appointment with the judge to determine his status.

“Substance Use Disorder”
Mr. Williams has a substance use disorder and is attending a treatment program through the court. As part of the program Mr. Williams is required to remain abstinent from alcohol and other drugs. He has been compliant with program requirements, until one month ago, when he was found to have two positive urine toxicology screens which revealed drug use and a breathalyzer reading which revealed alcohol consumption. Within the past month there was a further urine toxicology screen revealing drug use. Mr. Williams has had a substance use disorder for the past few years. He now awaits his appointment with the judge to determine his status.

Compared to those in the “substance use disorder condition”, those in the “substance abuse” condition agreed with the idea that the individual was personally culpable
Language Matters

Referring to someone as...

- “A substance abuser” – implies willful misconduct it is their fault & they can help it)
- “Having a substance use disorder” – implies a medical malfunction (it’s not their fault and they cannot help it)
- But, does it really matter how we refer to people with these (highly stigmatized) conditions?
- Can’t we just dismiss this as a well-meaning point, but merely “semantics” and “political correctness”?
- Let’s learn from our colleagues treating allied disorders: individuals with “eating-related conditions” are uniformly described as “having an eating disorder” NEVER as “food abusers”
We all play a part.
Peer-to-peer recovery

A peer is a peer when he/she identifies as a peer and is willing to share lived experience with others

Recovery advocate, trained peer recovery coach, certified recovery support worker (CRSW)
Frontline trained recovery coaches

• Trained individuals, usually with lived experience of addiction and recovery, who help “recoverees” along the path of recovery—before, during, after, or instead of treatment.

• “A recovery coach is a non-clinical person who helps remove personal and environmental obstacles to recovery, links the newly recovering person to the recovery community, and serves as a personal guide and mentor in the management of personal and family recovery. Such supports generated through mobilizing peer based volunteer resources within the recovery community, or provided by the recovery coach where such natural support networks are lacking” (William White, 2002).
Study in Cape Cod, MA compared 54 young opiate users enrolled in Recovery Coach program for 3-12 months with outcomes of a studied group from prior year, before recovery coaching was available.

- **Tripled** their days in recovery
- **Reduced** detox admissions by **40%**
- **Reduced** relapse episodes from **210 days to 3 days** (down **6900%**)
- **Reduced** hospitalizations from **16 to 3** (down **433%**)
- **Eliminated** legal issues from **26 to ZERO**
Addiction recovery is associated with dramatic improvements in all areas of life:

- Criminal activity decreases ten-fold
- More than 50% improvement in steady employment
- Use of costly emergency room departments decreases ten-fold
- Settling personal debt doubles
- Planning for the future (e.g., saving for retirement) increases nearly three-fold
- Domestic violence decreases dramatically
- Participation in family activities increases by 50%
- Volunteering in the community increases nearly three-fold
- Voting increases significantly
- Reports of untreated emotional/mental health problems decrease over four-fold
- Twice as many participants further their education or training

(Source: Faces and Voices of Recovery)
IMAGINE:

- Trained recovery coaches in a federally qualified health center
- The impact could be what we need to change the tide of this epidemic
- Reduced Emergency Department visits
- Reduced relapse rates
- Reduced legal involvement
- Saved lives
YOU ARE HELPING TO IMPROVE & SAVE LIVES

Thank You!

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