UNDERSTANDING DRUG-RELATED STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

Tools for Better Practice and Social Change
Introductions

- Name
- Organization
- How do you interact with drug users?
Goals

- Identify and explore the reach of drug-related stigma.
- Name strategies for confronting drug-related stigma.
- Promote productive service provision that avoids stigmatizing people who use drugs.
Training Guidelines

- Step up, Step Back
- Non-Judgment
- Talk with each other, not at each other
- Agree to disagree
- Confidentiality
A few basic principles…

- Drug use exists along a continuum
  - Abstinence is one of many possible goals
  - Meet people “where they are at”

- Drug-related harm can not be assumed
  - Drugs can meet important needs

- Drug users are more than their drug use
What is stigma?

A social process which can reinforce relations of power and control.

Leads to status loss and discrimination for the stigmatized.

- Link and Phelan
ACTIVITY: Forms of Stigma

- Stigma from individuals
- Institutional stigma
- Self-stigma (internalized)
- Stigma by association
Key Elements of Drug-Related Stigma

- Blame and moral judgment
- Criminalize
- Pathologize
- Patronize
- Fear and Isolate
Cycle of Drug-Related Stigma

- Stigma
- Stereotypes/Labels
- Expectations/ Roles
- Limited Opportunities
- Internalized & Reinforced

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Implications for Providers

- Willingness to access services
- Relationships and trust
  - Assumptions
- Participant risk and behaviors
- Participant self-worth
- Funding
Break!

- 10 minute break -
Video: Labels and Language

**Purpose:** Explore labels and language associated with drugs/drug use and their relationship to stigma

Pay attention to:

- Labels & Language
- Themes that you see in your work with clients
Drug User Labels

- Appearance and Stability
- Race/Ethnicity
- Gender/Sexual Orientation
- Health Status
- Choosing to abstain?
- Which drugs?
- Prescribed or street?
- How often?
Language

Junkies, Dope Fiends
Crack-heads, Crack Babies
Drug Addicts, Drug Abusers
Drug Users, People Who Use Drugs
Drug Use, Drug Abuse, Drug Misuse
Clean and Dirty
Relapse vs. Lapse
Functions of Stigma – The “3Ds”

- **Difference**: Keep people out
- **Danger**: Keep people away
- **Discrimination**: Keep people down
Activity: Dynamics of Stigma

**Purpose:** To explore different dynamics and consequences of stigma

**Keep in mind the 3-Ds:**

- Difference (Keeping people out)
- Danger (Keeping people away)
- Discrimination (Keeping people down)
Brainstorm ways that your institution stigmatizes drug users

Think about behaviors/actions

AND

Why it happens

(3Ds/Beliefs)
Round 2

Brainstorm ways that drug users may respond to the stigmatizing behaviors from round 1

Name behaviors/actions

AND

Ways stigma may be internalized
List 3 strategies/alternatives to challenge the stigmatizing behaviors you have discussed.

Either from the perspective of the institution

OR

As a provider helping a client
Challenging Stigma, Creating Change

Individual Level

Community Level

Staff Level
Individual Level

- Language
- Honesty
- Relationships
- Disclosure and dialogue
- Education and personal development
Staff and Community Level

**Staff Level**
- Training and education
- Outlets for feedback
- Assessment of practices
- Hiring Drug Users

**Community Level**
- Participant Advisory Boards
- Awareness Campaigns
- Policy and advocacy
- Events
Release Campaign