

IMPACT OF STIGMA ON PERINATAL PATIENTS WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Recommendations for Moving Forward



TREAT PATIENTS WITH RESPECT AND EMPATHY

When pregnant persons and parents who use drugs seek healthcare for themselves and their children they need be treated with dignity and respect.

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE STIGMATIZED CARE

Training healthcare professionals on how stigma creates harms, illustrating how to integrate de-stigmatization tools into healthcare spaces, and providing holistic support are three strategies to eliminate the receipt of stigmatized care.

CHARACTERISTICS OF STIGMA-FREE CARE

Providing stigma free care includes but is not limited to being trauma and culturally aware, using non-punitive approaches, and treating patients with compassion, dignity, and respect.

COLLABORATION

Collaborate with the experts. This includes those with lived/living experience, peer recovery support specialists, harm reduction organization, doulas, midwives, and others who represent the population you serve.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND DISPARITIES

Recognize the intersectionality of race, substance use, and pregnancy as there are unacceptable maternal and infant disparities by race in the United States.

KEEP THE PATIENT FIRST

Use person first, recovery-oriented language when providing healthcare.

| STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE | HELPFUL LANGUAGE |
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| "She just wants attention." | "She is crying out for help." |
| "Those moms have poor coping methods." | "They have survival skills that got them to where they are now." |
| "They'll never get over it." | "Recovery is process, it takes time." |
| "They are weak." | "They are stronger for having experienced trauma." |

Vermont Oxford Network, 2016

HELPFUL RESOURCES



[The Academy of Perinatal Harm Reduction](#)



[National Harm Reduction Coalition](#)



[Local Harm Reduction Organizations](#)



[Never Use Alone](#)

"If pregnant persons with substance use got compassionate care they would have more opportunities to heal and grow, which would open the door for their children to do the same." – Michelle Kavouras, CPRS, NCRS, & EMPOWER stakeholder

"We need to move towards ZERO TOLERANCE of stigmatizing approaches to care." – Davida Schiff, MD, MSC