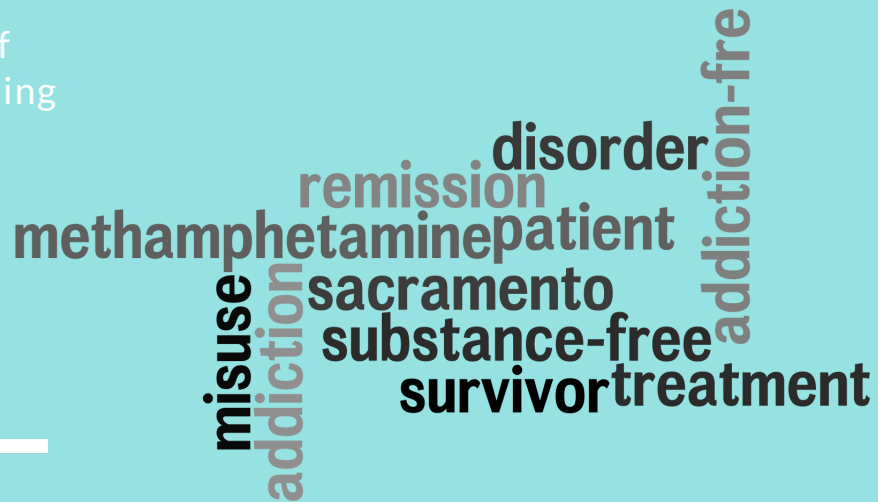


# WORDS MATTER

Words hold power, and your choice of words can contribute to stigma, creating barriers to effective treatment of substance use disorder.

Here are a few word and phrase substitutions that focus on the person instead of the disorder



## 1 **ADDICT, USER, JUNKIE** → **PERSON WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER**

Instead use person with substance use disorder, or person with an addiction, to create a distinction between the person and the disease.

## 2 **DRUG ABUSE** → **MISUSE**

“Abuse” (1) negates the fact that addictive disorders are a medical condition; (2) blames the illness on the individual with the illness, ignores environmental and genetic factors, as well as the ability of substances to alter brain chemistry; (3) absolves those selling and promoting addictive substances of any wrong doing.

## 3 **CLEAN, DIRTY TEST RESULTS** → **NEGATIVE, POSITIVE**

Clean or dirty test results terms are stigmatizing because they associate illness symptoms (i.e. positive drug tests) with filth.

## 4 **DRUG HABIT** → **ACTIVE ADDICTION**

Referring to an addictive disorders as a habit denies the medical component of the condition, implying that the simple application of willpower is what's needed to resolve the matter.