

PREFERRED TERMS FOR SELECT POPULATIONS



PEOPLE WITH JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT

Instead of:
inmates
criminals
convicts

PEOPLE LIVING WITH (DIAGNOSIS)

Instead of:
HIV patients
monkeypox cases
epileptics/diabetics

PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

Instead of:
addicts
alcoholics
drug abusers

PEOPLE WHO ARE UNDERSERVED BY...

Instead of:
the underserved
the uninsured
hard-to-reach

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS/ UNSTABLE HOUSING

Instead of:
the homeless
transients

PEOPLE WITH UNDOCUMENTED STATUS

Instead of:
illegals
illegal aliens

PEOPLE WITH LOWER INCOMES

Instead of:
the poor
poor people
poverty-stricken

PEOPLE LIVING WITH A MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS

Instead of:
crazy people
mentally ill

OLDER ADULTS OR PERSONS AGED (NUMERIC AGE GROUP)

Instead of:
the elderly
seniors

PEOPLE AT AN INCREASED RISK FOR...

Instead of:
high-risk people
vulnerable people
priority populations

PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN RURAL AREAS

Instead of:
rural people
frontier people
country people

PEOPLE WHO ENGAGE IN TRANSACTIONAL SEX/ SEX WORK

Instead of:
prostitutes
prostitution

SIMPLE LANGUAGE CHANGES CAN HELP REDUCE STIGMA!

THE LANGUAGE WE USE MATTERS

Language is powerful - especially when talking about substance use.

Instead of saying this...

Say this..

Addict, user, or junkie



Person with substance use disorder

Substance or drug abuser



Patient or client

Ex-addict or clean



Person in recovery or long-term recovery

Drug abuse



Substance use

Addicted baby



Baby with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS)

Clean/dirty urine drug screen



Tested negative/positive for substance(s)

Drunk



Person under the influence of alcohol

Person-first language removes stigma by emphasizing the person rather than their diagnosis. Person-first language reframes the situation by removing stigmatizing language and creating a non-judgmental environment for positive interactions between patients and providers, leading to better rapport and health outcomes..