

Understanding Opioid Use Disorder

Those who live with or help care for a family member with a chronic disease understand the challenges associated with keeping their loved ones healthy. Imagine living with chronic disease surrounded by so much stigma that people are afraid to get the care they need.

Addiction is that disease.

It's a disease few of us understand, whether or not we've had experience it firsthand. Opioids, because of their extremely powerful addictive properties, are the most common cause of drug overdose in Hoosiers, and they are a major reason for emergency room visits in Indiana and nationally. The effects of opioid use on individuals and the devastation of the opioid epidemic on Hoosiers families and communities are visible throughout our state.

Upon taking office, Governor Holcomb made attacking the drug epidemic a top priority and appointed Jim McClelland as Executive Director for Drug Prevention, Treatment and Enforcement to lead the state's efforts. Together, the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration and Jim McClelland are working hard to help Hoosiers understand that there is hope and treatment for those who have opioid use disorders.

Not only is stigma hurtful for people with an opioid use disorder, it is potentially deadly when it prevents them from seeking the care they need to manage their disease. Learning the facts about opioid use disorder is a good way to begin to decrease stigma and increase support for individuals with substance use disorder. FSSA wants to help Hoosiers "Know the O Facts." That's the title of a new grassroots effort to reduce the stigma of opioid use disorder. Understanding starts with knowledge.

What are the "O Facts" about opioid use disorder? There are three facts we'd like you to remember:

1. Opioid use disorder is a disease.
2. There is treatment available.
3. Recovery is possible.

The "Know the O Facts" campaign will help build awareness and understanding about opioid use disorder so we can end stigma and let healing begin. We developed a website (KnowtheOFacts.org) to stand as the home of our campaign. Look for "O Facts" in your communities, and help us spread the word to your friends, family and neighbors.

Let's change the way Hoosiers think about and treat people with an opioid use disorder. To end this epidemic, we will all need to be a part of the solution. You can take the pledge at KnowtheOFacts.org to show your support for reducing stigma.

A family member, neighbor or friend may not seek treatment because they feel embarrassed, ashamed and discriminated against. Here are a few things you can do to reduce stigma and break down the barriers to effective care.

- Choose your words carefully—the way we talk about this disorder matters, as does education, understanding, empathy and hope. Remember, recovery is possible.

- Learn about the effectiveness of medication-assisted treatment and recovery while desensitizing the treatment process.
- Help us share knowledge so we can change the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of those around us and reduce stigma and its negative consequences.
- Contact us if you would like to help provide training to others in your community. Working together, we can more effectively reduce stigma and offer hope to those with opioid use disorder across Indiana. Call 317-234-7918 for more information and educational materials.

With your help, we can solve the most critical public health crisis of our time. And, knowing the “O Facts” could be the first step.

Opioid use disorder is a disease. There is treatment. Recovery is possible.

Jennifer Walthall, MD, MPH
Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration