PATIENTS WITH OPIOID ADDICTION NEED YOUR SUPPORT – NOT STIGMA

Myths about opioid use disorder or OUD (previously called opioid addiction) lead to mistaken beliefs that impact how we interact with patients and may reduce their willingness to engage in life-saving treatment options. **OUD is a chronic disease that can be managed with medication and counseling, just like hypertension and diabetes.**

The most successful patients have strong support systems that include ALL staff plus family

MYTH: "Addiction is a moral failing"

FACT: **Addiction is a medical disease** and is not a moral failing or a sign of weak willpower; it occurs **because opioids can change your brain. People with OUD don't choose addiction** just like someone doesn't choose hypertension or diabetes. Like most patients with chronic conditions, patients will have times of success in their condition and times of difficulty with their condition.

MYTH: "Taking medications for opioid addiction is just trading one addiction for another"

FACT: **There is good evidence that patients with OUD can be well-managed with medications** that include the opioids buprenorphine/naloxone, buprenorphine, and methadone. These medications can help reduce opioid cravings, allow for positive lifestyle and behavior changes, help keep patients in treatment, help prevent relapse, and save lives by reducing the number of fatal overdoses. Medications for OUD also include the long-acting injection naltrexone (the non-opioid option).

Stigmatizing words lead to harmful labels & feelings of shame
WHAT YOU SAY AND HOW YOU SAY IT MATTERS
Choose conversation around addiction that is helpful not hurtful

THINK AND SAY:	INSTEAD OF:
Person with opioid use disorder **Person with an opioid addiction**	Addict Abuser User Junkie
Misuse, Unhealthy use	Abuse
Being in remission or recovery **Not taking drugs** **Abstinent from drugs** **Person in recovery**	Clean Former addict
Testing negative **Negative test result**	Clean urine drug screen
Testing positive **Positive test result**	Dirty urine drug screen

References available upon request