

# What Can You Do?

Help inspire a stigma-free culture:

- Tell people how their words or actions make you feel.
- If you're uncomfortable, find someone who will assist you in talking with the individual.
- If you're upset by an experience, get support from a staff member, friend or other trusted person.
- If you're unable to resolve a situation, contact the **BEST** Champion at your agency.
- If you need further assistance, contact OCHN Customer Services at: 1 (800) 341-2003.

The **B**egin **E**nding **S**tigma **T**oday workgroup is a team of dedicated representatives from OCHN and its provider agencies.

### **BEST Mission:**

To create a stigma-free culture in Oakland County.

### **OCHN Resources:**

Resource and Crisis Helpline  
(800) 231-1127  
[www.oaklandchn.org](http://www.oaklandchn.org)

### **Customer Service**

For more information about **BEST** please contact Customer Services at (800) 341-2003.

OCHN does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.



**B**egin **E**nding **S**tigma **T**oday  
*Creating a stigma-free culture.*



Stigma.  
Recognize it.  
Change it!

# Recognizing Stigma

Stigma is the action of judging people based on stereotypes and using labels to describe and categorize them. It can be painful and insulting, especially for persons who have an intellectual/developmental disability, mental illness, or substance use disorder. People who experience stigma may feel:

- Disrespected
- Embarrassed
- Excluded
- Inadequate
- Sad
- Scared

Changing how society thinks about and treats people who have disabilities starts by stating facts. Persons living with a disability:

- Are your family, friends and neighbors
- Achieve goals
- Go to school
- Get married
- Have feelings and opinions
- Live independently
- Work

# Why, Who & Where

Lack of understanding and awareness can add to stigma toward people who have a disability. Many individuals with good intentions may not know that their actions or words are hurtful. In fact, stigma offenders can be people whose goal it is to help.

## Stigma Within the Public Mental Health System

People receiving services for their disability sometimes experience stigma within the healthcare industry. They are often:

- Ignored
- Labeled
- Offended by negative tone and body language
- Pitied
- Referenced by diagnosis
- Focused on inabilities



## Stigma Outside the Public Mental Health System

### *COMMUNITY*

Myths and false ideas about people who have disabilities affect the way some employers, schools, or local organizations respond to them.

### *FAMILY*

Well-meaning family members may focus too much attention on the illness or disability and less on the person's abilities and intelligence.

### *SELF-STIGMA*

Self-stigma occurs when people believe negative stereotypes and judge themselves because of their mental illness, developmental disability, or substance use disorder. Examples of self stigma include:

- I am embarrassed
- I am ashamed
- I am unworthy
- I am stupid
- I am failure
- I am a junkie
- I am a big disappointment