

“Can we talk about your drug use?”
**Best practices for engaging patients with
substance use disorders**

Jared W. Klein, MD, MPH
Assistant Professor
Division of General Internal Medicine
University of Washington School of Medicine

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Panel Discussants

James Darnton, MD

Clinical Instructor

Division of General Internal Medicine

University of Washington School of Medicine

Jocelyn James, MD

Assistant Professor

Division of General Internal Medicine

University of Washington School of Medicine

Disclosures

No conflicts of interest or relationships to disclose

Learning objectives

At the conclusion of this talk, learner will be able to:

- Demonstrate 2 patient-centered means of starting a conversation about substance use
- Communicate the importance of destigmatizing language to a colleague
- Contrast 3 more versus less stigmatizing terms used in clinical practice

Outline

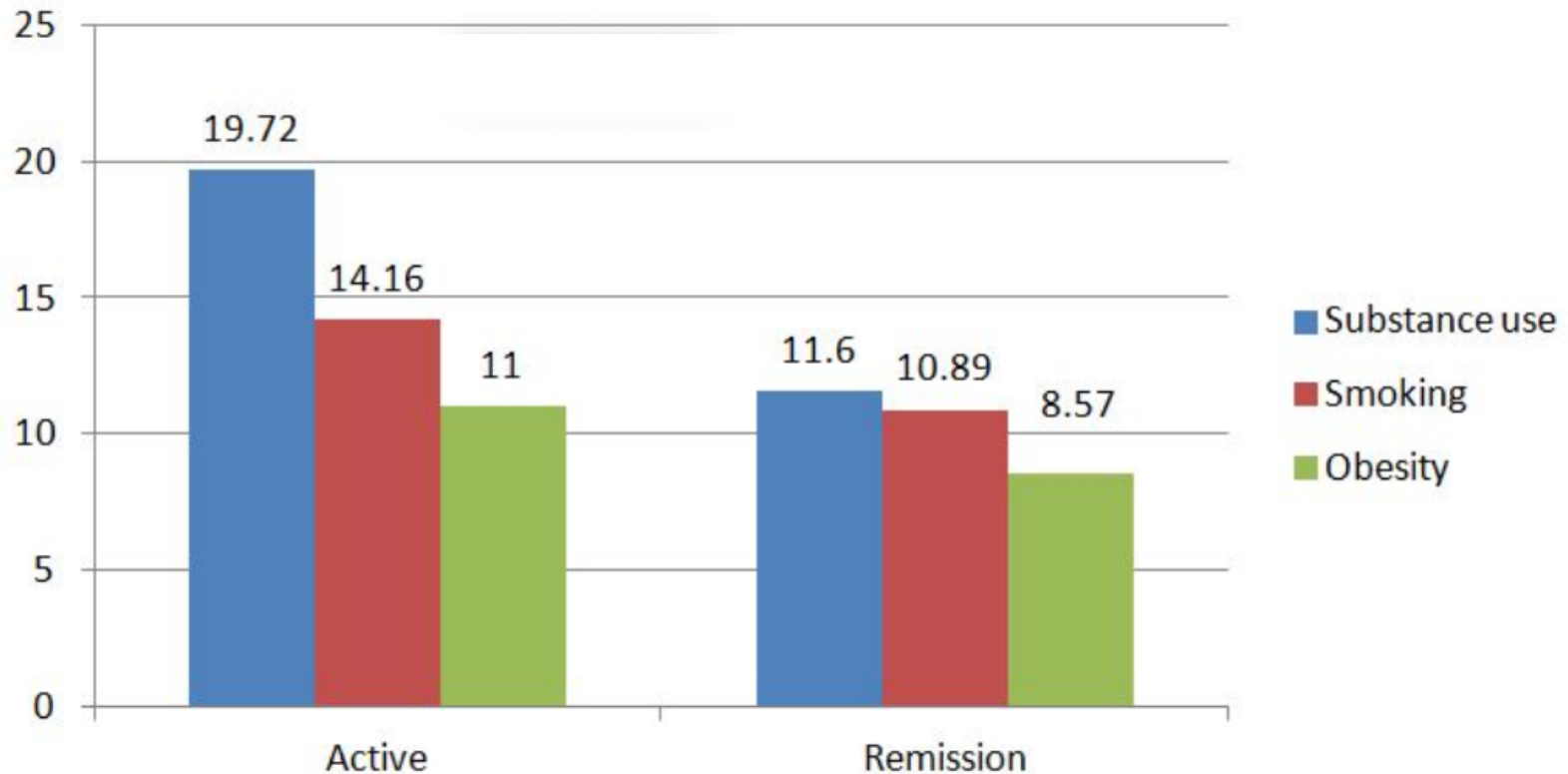
- Stigma and how it affects patients
- Opening the conversation
- Eliciting and motivating goals
- Preferred terminology
- Discussion / Q&A

Why is this important?

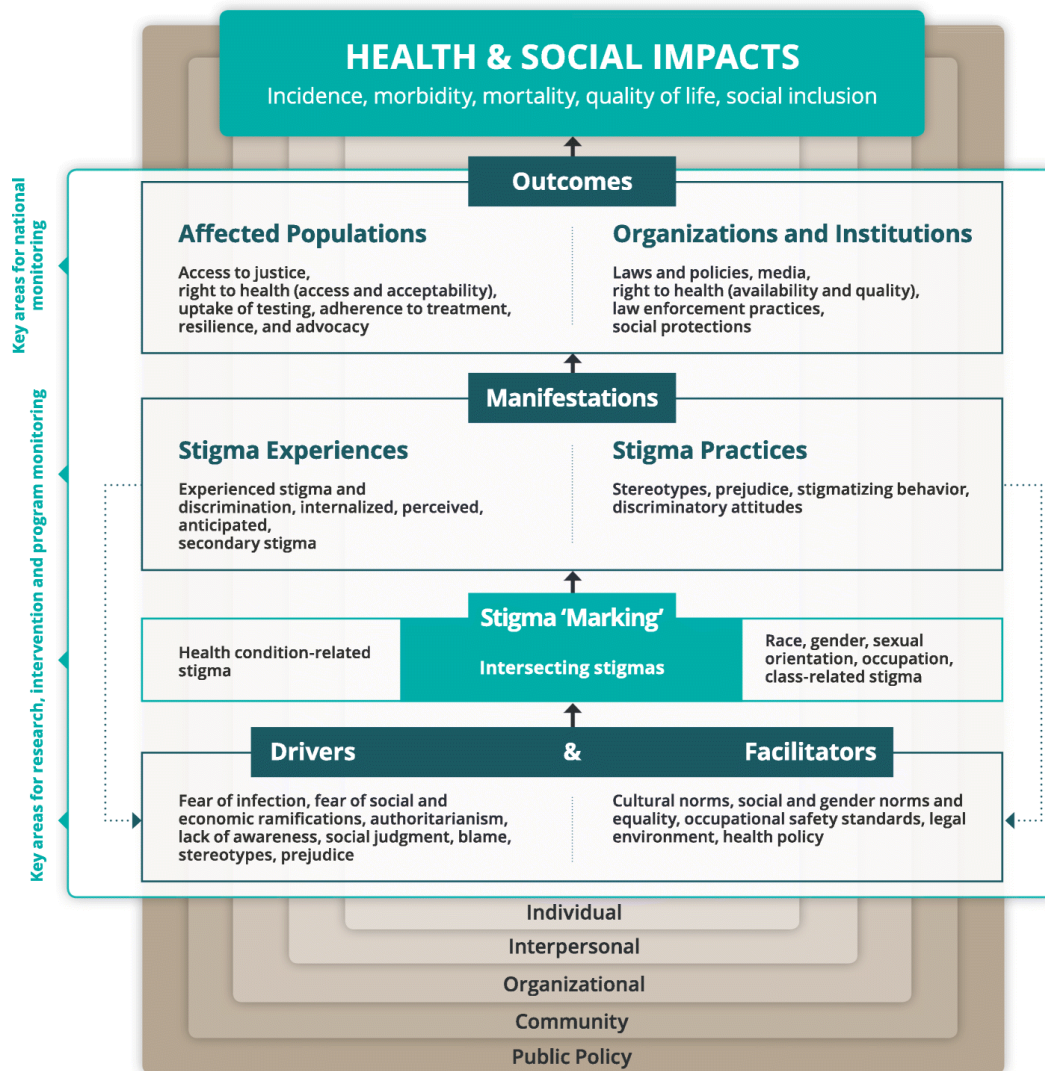


SUD Stigma in Context

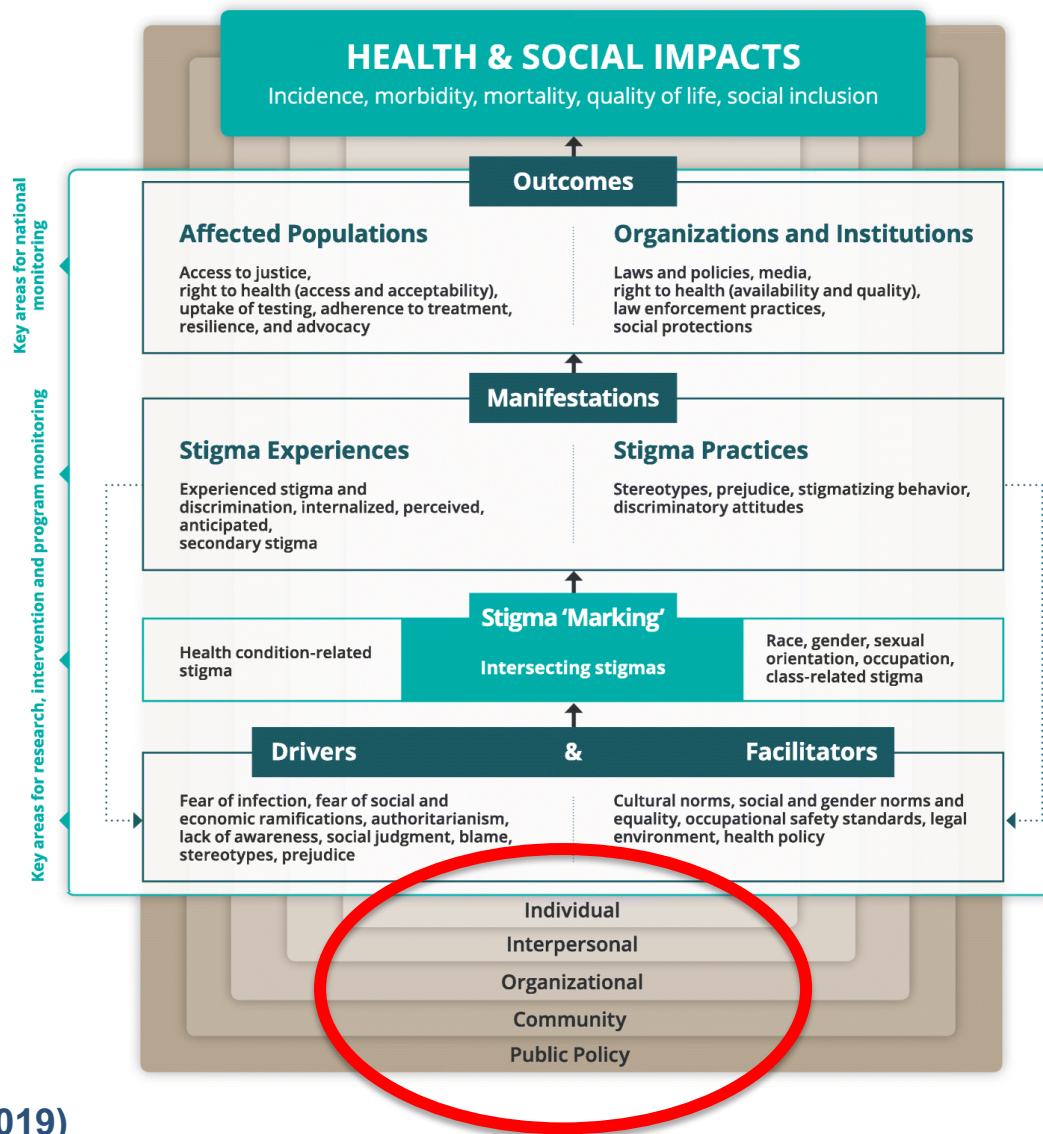
Average Social Distance Score by Condition



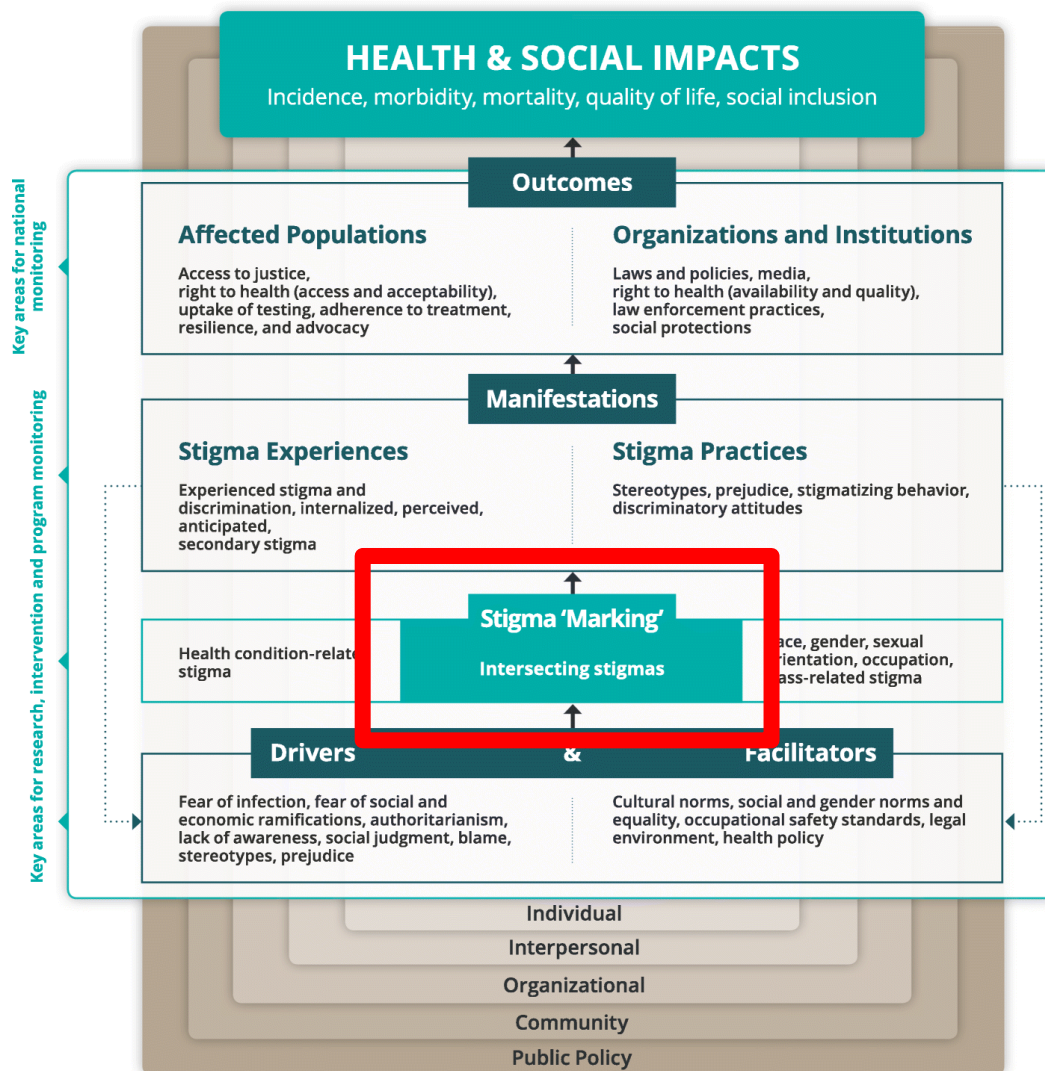
Stigma Framework



Stigma Framework



Stigma Framework

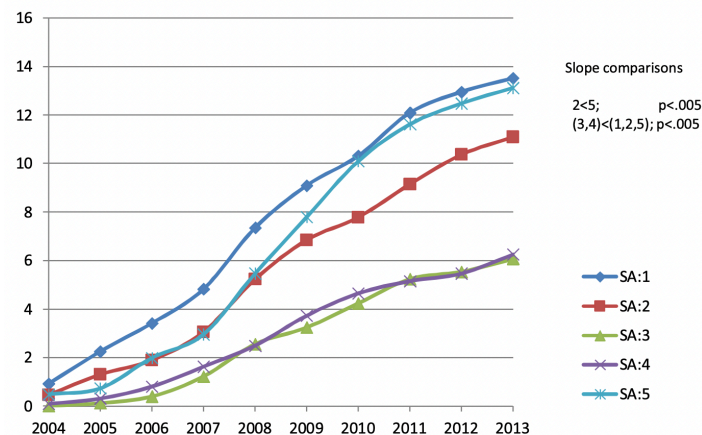
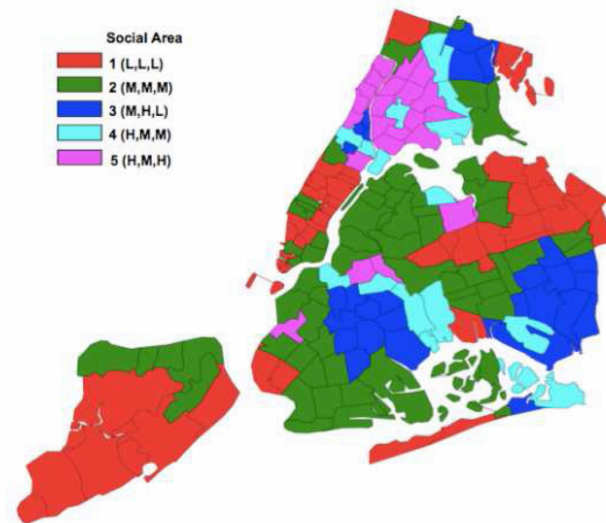


Intersecting Stigmas

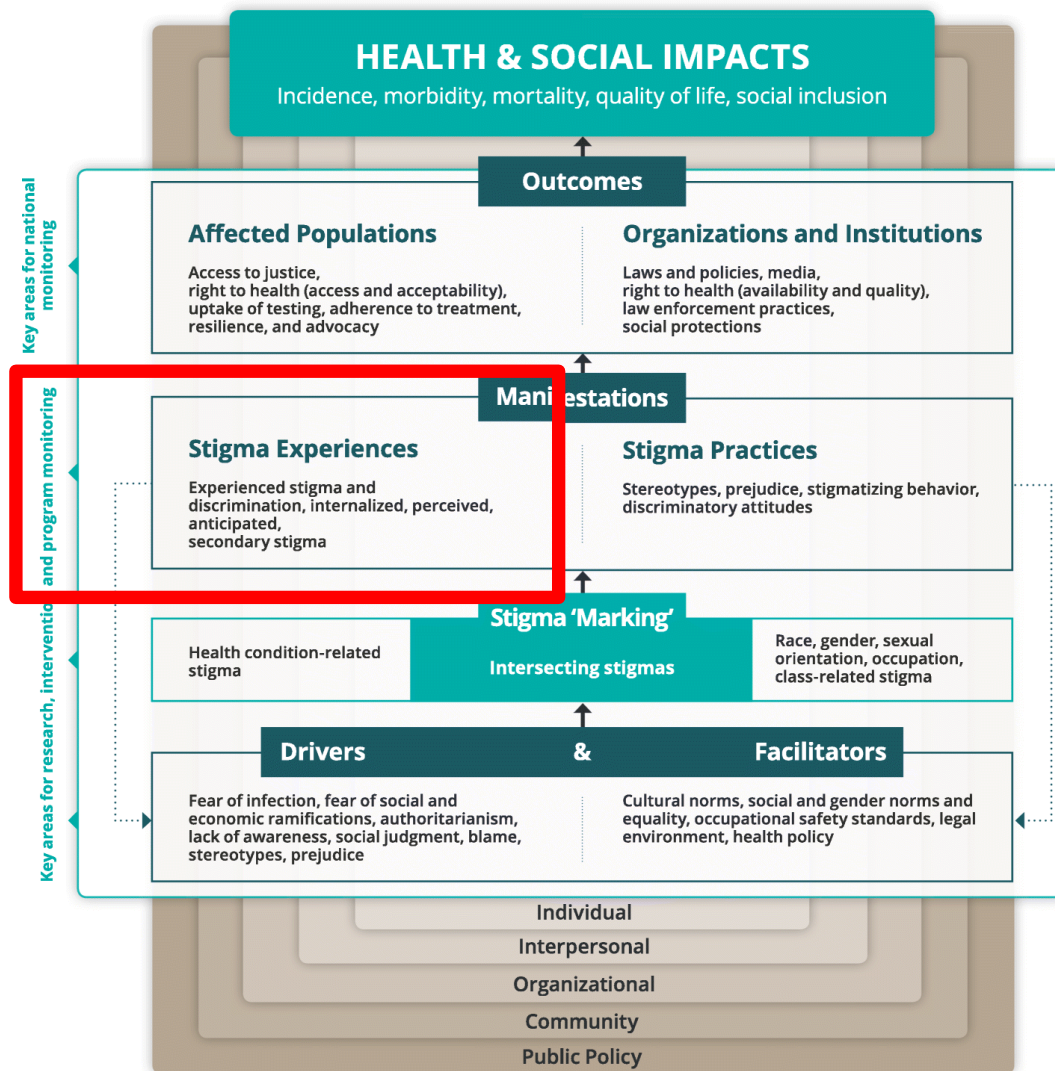
Study of MOUD availability by neighborhood in NYC

- **Buprenorphine** treatment significantly more common in with areas with higher income and fewer Black/Hispanic residents
- **Methadone** treatment significantly more common in areas with lower income and more Black/Hispanic residents

Disparity worsened from 2004-2013



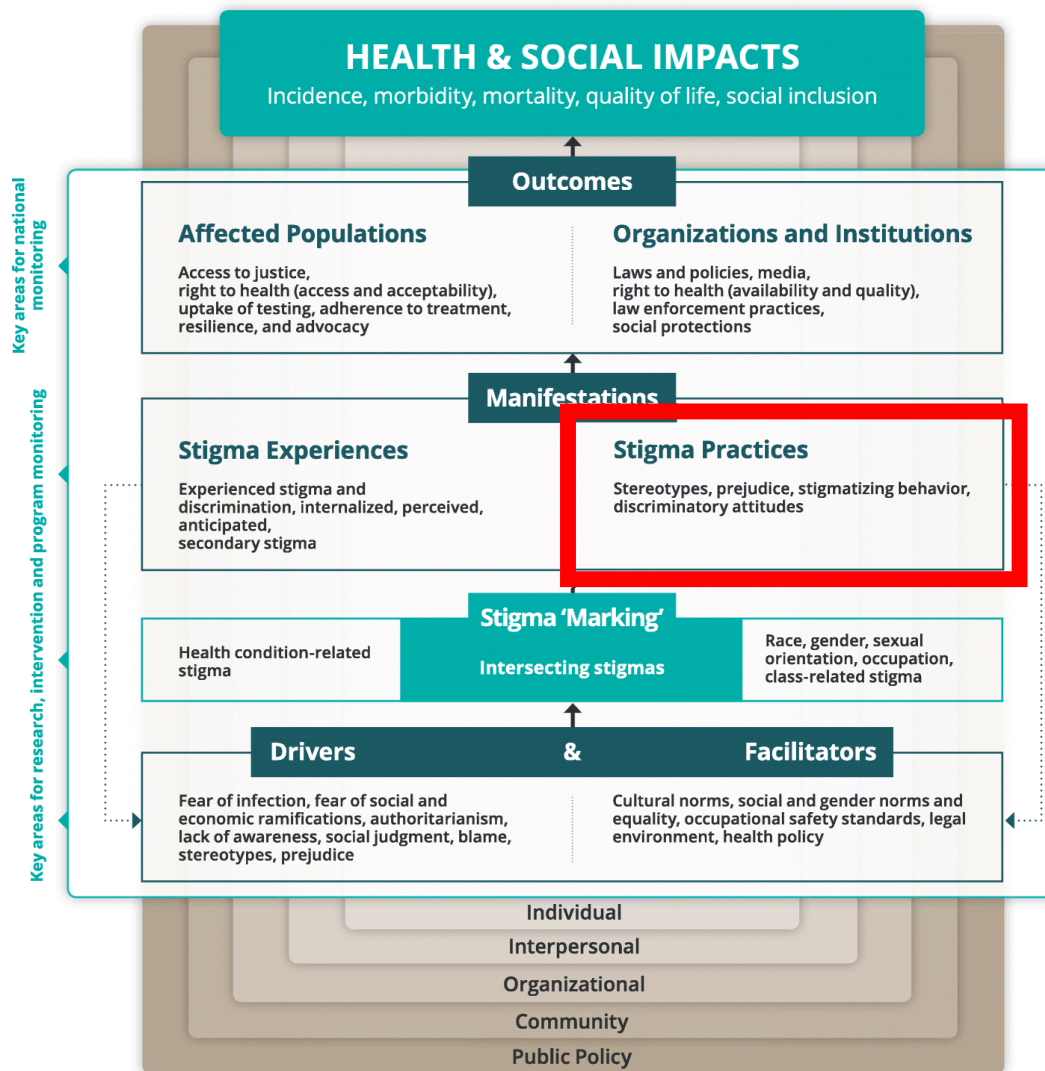
Stigma Framework



Stigma Experiences

- Small cohort study of PLWH (n=358)
- Surveyed about stigma experience, depressive symptoms and substance use over 1-month period
- Results:
 - Higher levels internalized stigma associated with greater depressive symptoms
 - Depressive symptoms were associated with substance use (both self-reported and objective measures)

Stigma Framework



Stigma Practices

- RCT with >500 mental health professionals
- 2 vignettes presented...

Stigma Practices

Vignette #1:

- “The patient is a **substance abuser** and is attending a treatment program through the court. As part of the program he is required to remain abstinent from alcohol and other drugs. He has been compliant with program requirements, until one month ago, when he was found to have two positive urine toxicology screens which revealed drug use. The patient has been a **substance abuser** for the past few years. He now awaits his appointment with the judge to determine his status.”

Stigma Practices

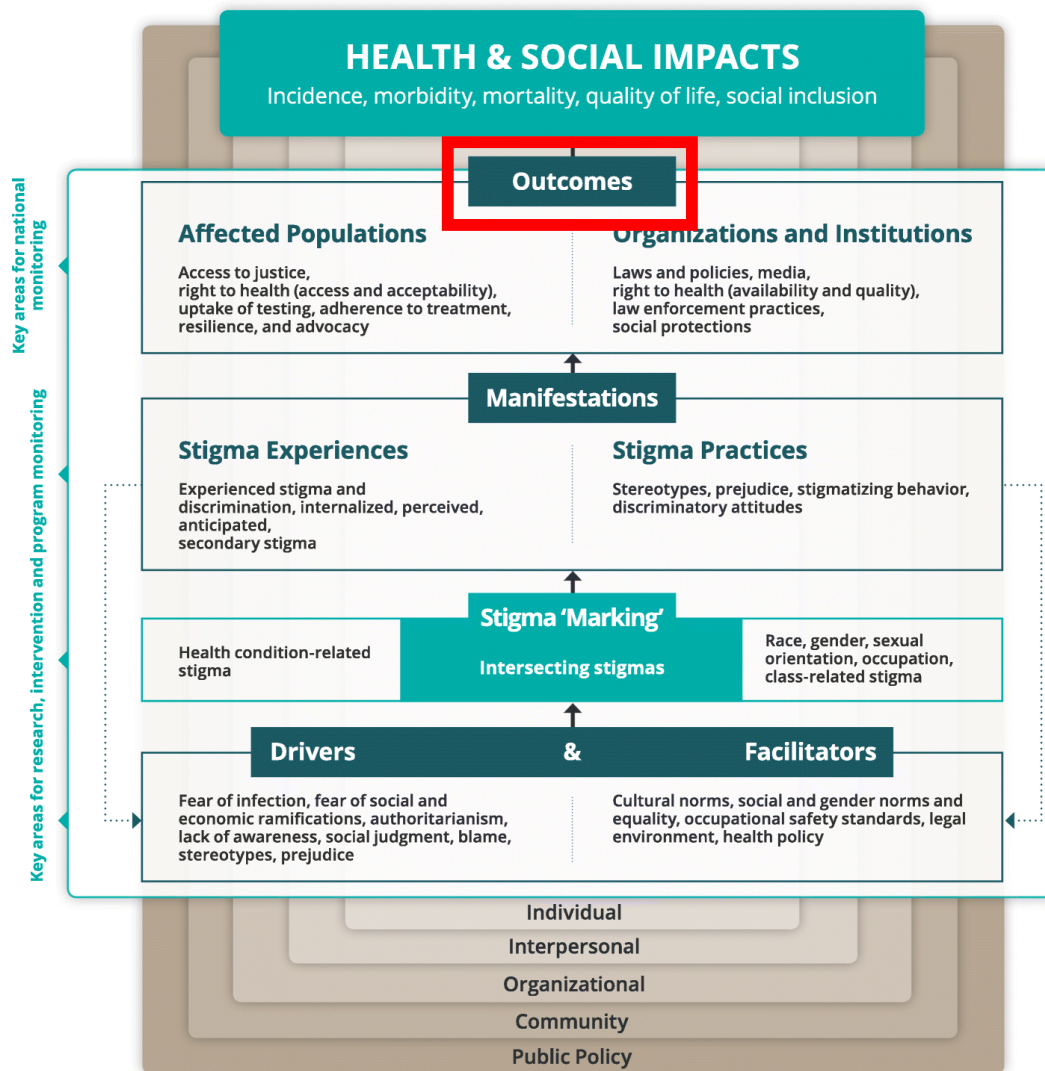
Vignette #2:

- “The patient has a **substance use disorder** and is attending a treatment program through the court. As part of the program he is required to remain abstinent from alcohol and other drugs. He has been compliant with program requirements, until one month ago, when he was found to have two positive urine toxicology screens which revealed drug use. The patient has had a **substance use disorder** for the past few years. He now awaits his appointment with the judge to determine his status.”

Stigma Practices

Significant increase in sense that person deserves **blame** **and punishment** with “substance abuse” vs. “substance use disorder”

Stigma Framework



Stigma Outcomes

- Feeds cycle of substance use
- Less likely to seek treatment
- Less likely to stay in treatment
- Worse health outcomes
- Exacerbates health disparities

Multiple Strategies to Address Stigma

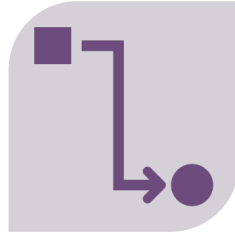
Structural

Community

Organization

Interpersonal

Individual



**POLICY
CHANGE**



ADVOCACY



PEERS



CONTACT



EDUCATION

Start the Conversation

- Explain the rationale
- Ask permission
- Start with less stigmatized substances (tobacco, alcohol)
- Ask normalizing, open-ended questions

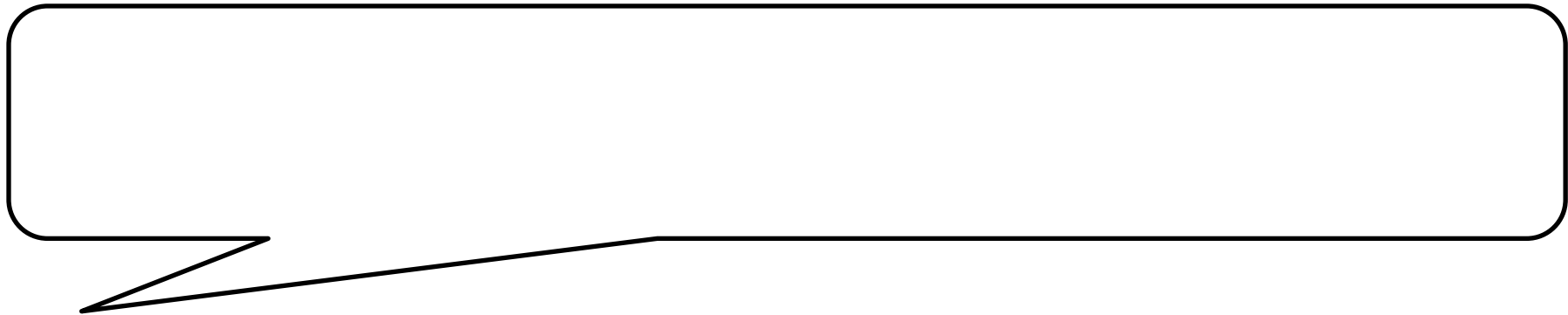
Use Open-Ended Questions

- Study of 56 providers and 162 people living with HIV
- Analyzed transcripts of visits discussing substance use
 - Compared disclosure during visit to patient self-report on standardized questionnaire
- Determined types of questions that elicited accurate response

Use Open-Ended Questions

Question type	Disclosed	Examples
Open-ended ($n = 18$)	18 (100 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Tell me what's happening with drugs.</i>• <i>And in terms of the drug use how is that going?</i>• <i>How's the drinking going?</i>
Normalizing ($n = 14$)	14 (100 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>When was the last time you used any drugs?</i>• <i>When was the last time you used your cocaine?</i>
Closed-ended ($n = 36$)	21 (58 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Have you used any coke?</i>• <i>Are you using any drugs?</i>• <i>Now are you drinking at all?</i>
Leading towards non-use ($n = 9$)	2 (22 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>And you've remained clean from drugs and alcohol, correct?</i>• <i>Have you been clean?</i>• <i>And you haven't been drinking at all?</i>

Putting it all together...



Putting it all together...

“I ask all my patients about their substance use

Normalizing

Putting it all together...

“I ask all my patients about their substance use because it can impact their health.”

Normalizing

Rationale

Putting it all together...

“I ask all my patients about their substance use because it can impact their health. Can I ask you a few questions about your substance use?”

Normalizing

Rationale

Permission

Putting it all together...

“I ask all my patients about their substance use because it can impact their health. Can I ask you a few questions about your substance use?”

Normalizing

Rationale

Permission

Assume use

“Sure”

“In the last year, how often have you used drugs?”

Spirit of Motivational Interviewing

- Everyone has reasons to continue their substance use and reasons to make changes
 - *Our goal:* Acknowledge reasons for continued use, while reflecting with patients on reasons to change.
- Partner, listen compassionately, empathize
- **AVOID the righting reflex**
- Empower, enhance self-efficacy, highlight successes



Dig Deeper



- Listen
- Elicit hopes and dreams
- Express gratitude
- Adopt a collaborative attitude

Use Destigmatizing Language

AVOID

USE

Addict, user, IVDrugs	Person with SUD
Substance abuse/dependence	Substance use disorder
Clean/dirty UA	Substance present/absent
Clean & sober/lapse or slipup	In recovery/ongoing use
Relapse	Return to use
Treatment failure	Treatment attempt
Substitution, replacement	Medication

How do I bring this up with a colleague?

- Maintain humility; we all make mistakes and are learning/growing together
- Role model in your discussions and your documentation (creating a culture)
- Speak up (politely) when you hear others using stigmatizing language
- Avoid singling anyone out (choose a private space)

Other Ways to Welcome Patients with SUDs

- Display pamphlets, posters, lanyards and other information with positive messages about individuals with SUD
- Make peer support resources readily available
- Consider patient advisory group to get feedback and generate new ideas



Panel Discussion

- How have you witnessed (or perpetrated) stigma against individuals with SUD in your practice?
- How have you (or might you) approach a colleague who is using stigmatizing language or attitudes?
- What attitude or terminology is most challenging for you to adopt?
- What other strategies have you used to engage patients with SUDs?

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