Addressing Misconceptions
About Patients with Substance Use Disorders

Knowledge Domain

When many people think of substance use, they may only see one “type” of person — one who lacks self-control or has an inability to make good decisions. Many believe that if someone is struggling with substance use they must be lower-class ethnic minorities. While being of lower socioeconomic status may be a risk factor in substance use, it does not represent this population as a whole. As a health care provider, it’s your responsibility to understand and address the fact that a person with a substance use disorder can look like anyone.

Recommended Group Activity

Discuss the impact of misconceptions about people with a substance use disorder. What have you learned about stigma and substance use disorder, and how might that affect your personal and work life? Some common misconceptions include:

- There is a standard treatment program for everyone with an SUD.
- SUD is a choice and/or a moral failing.
- Minorities and those of the lower socioeconomic status are at a greater risk for first-time substance use.
- Men are more likely than women to have an SUD.
- A person with an SUD rarely seeks treatment immediately and is more likely to do so once they have hit “rock bottom.”

To Learn More

Misconceptions About SUD Treatment

Dispelling Myths: Substance Use Disorder