Preventing Mental Health Stigma
Choosing Empowerment Over Shame

**Knowledge Domain**

Many people with SUD also have other mental illnesses, such as depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder. Unfortunately, stigma can create treatment barriers.

You can prevent stigma around substance use and mental illness. Talk openly about mental illness in your center to normalize the conversation. Use person-first person language when addressing someone with a mental illness (e.g., saying they have bipolar disorder instead of they are bipolar).

Education also plays a large role in reducing stigma, largely by helping to change our attitudes and behaviors around those with a mental illness. Learning how stigma can prevent people from getting treatment can help people realize the importance of reducing stigma. Lastly, being an advocate for those with a mental illness and supporting them through their treatment process is a great way to show that you care about not only that individual but everyone with a mental illness.

**Recommended Group Activity**

Discuss dual-diagnosis. How does substance use affect mental illness and vice versa? Do you think that treating the diagnoses simultaneously is the most effective course of action? Why or why not?

**To Learn More**

9 Ways to Fight Mental Health Stigma

Common Comorbidities with Substance Use Disorders
http://bit.ly/2PVSM1N