

## ■ What can YOU do to combat stigma?

1. **Use person first language.**  
Say, “a person with schizophrenia” versus “a schizophrenic.” People are not their diagnoses.
2. **Avoid stigmatizing language.**  
Calling something “crazy” or using a diagnosis as an adjective perpetuates negative perception.
3. **Educate yourself.**  
Much of the stigma against mental health and/or substance use disorders can be attributed to a lack of knowledge.
4. **Be understanding.**  
Odds are that you already know someone with a condition. Think about how your words and actions could affect someone struggling with their diagnosis.
5. **Attend a Stigma Free event.**  
Schedule a stigma free training for your community or attend a meeting. View our online event calendar.

## ■ Community Resources

### Treatment and Recovery

**Richard Hall Community  
Mental Health Center**  
(908) 725-2800

### Advocacy

**NAMI NJ**

(732) 940-0991

**NCAAR-BH**

(609) 689-0599

**Somerset County**

**Department of Human Services  
Mental Health Administrator**  
(908) 704-6302

**Addiction Services Director**  
(908) 704-6309

### Crisis Services

**Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services  
(Bridgeway PESS)**  
(908) 526-4100

For more information please contact  
Somerset County Department of  
Human Services at (908) 704-6300 and  
[www.co.somerset.nj.us/stigmafree](http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/stigmafree)

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**SOMERSET COUNTY BOARD OF  
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

*stigma free*  
**Somerset County**

**Stop  
The  
Ignorance,  
Gain  
More  
Awareness**

**Somerset County**  
**PROUD TO BE**  
*stigma free*

*There is no health without mental health.*  
#breakthestigma #SCNJstigmafree



**Somerset County  
Department of Human Services**

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## ■ What is stigma?

Stigma is defined as a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person. Public perception has a lot to do with the prevalence of stigma, especially when it comes to mental health and substance use. Poor or improper depictions of mental health and substance use in popular media can negatively affect the day-to-day lives of people living with these conditions.

## ■ Effects of Stigma

Stigmatization can have far-reaching consequences. It can lead to harassment and bullying, can negatively affect employment and housing prospects, and often leads to isolation and a refusal to seek treatment out of fear of being seen as “crazy.” Many believe that having a mental health or substance use disorder causes people to become violent, but those who have a diagnosis are far more likely to be a victim of a violent crime.

## ■ Common misconceptions

***You don't need to get help if you just pray / exercise / change your diet.***

- **These can all be helpful coping skills, but only a mental health professional can determine what level of care is needed.**

***Mental health and substance use are results of sin, the devil, or possession.***

- **There is no moral failing associated with these conditions.**

***“I was depressed, but then I did this simple thing and I got better!”***

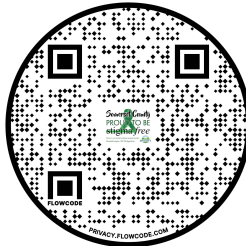
- **Feeling depressed and having clinical depression are very separate things. Many who don't understand clinical depression believe it has a simple “cure.”**

***Using drugs or alcohol is a personal choice so we shouldn't sympathize with these decisions.***

- **Substance use is a disease and should be treated and regarded with respect. We don't morally criticize those with cancer or diabetes.**

***Someone who takes medication has “given up” or should have been able to “tough it out.”***

- **Many conditions are caused by imbalances in brain chemistry. For many, this means that medication is necessary for their recovery.**



## ■ Who are we?

We are the Stigma Free Committee of Somerset County. Some of our members live with mental health and substance use disorders and some do not, but we all believe that stigma is harmful. It is our goal to educate our community through our personal stories and testimonies, and to prove that a person with a condition is indistinguishable from someone without one. Through treatment and support, recovery is possible to achieve and maintain.

## Stigmatizing language to avoid

*“I can't believe he's dating that **crazy** girl.”*

*“I'm **addicted** to chocolate peanut butter cups.”*

*“He's such a **schizo**. It's like he's got **multiple personalities** or something.”*

*“You look like a **crackhead** with that hairstyle.”*

*“I'm going to **kill myself** if I have to type another word.”*

*“It's just my **psycho** ex.”*

*“He can't help it, he's a **junkie**.”*

**Words matter:** Use person-first language when discussing diagnoses and symptoms.

