

WORDS MATTER

Words send a powerful message that changes how people are treated, how they feel about themselves, and whether they seek treatment. Words can lead to unintended misunderstanding, judgement and even discrimination. Below is a list of recommended terms to replace those that are out-of-date:

NON-PREFERRED TERMS	PREFERRED TERMS
Detoxification of methadone or buprenorphine	Tapering or medically supervised withdrawal . . .
Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), Substitution/Replacement Therapy	Medication Treatment, MOUD (Medication for Opioid Use Disorder; Opioid Agonist Therapy (in the case of methadone or buprenorphine);
Abstinence-based, drug free treatment	Treatment without (or that does not offer) medication, medication-free treatment. (A person on medication treatment can be abstinent and “drug free”)
(Substance) user, addict, abuser	Person with (substance) use, or (substance) use disorder, using (substance) (i.e. “person-first” language)
IV drug user (IVDU), shooter.	Person who injects drugs
Shooting heroin	Injecting heroin use or injection heroin use
A (substance) habit, a drug of choice	A (substance) use disorder, using (substance)
Clean, straight, sober	Abstinent, Substance (or drug) free, in remission, person in recovery, not currently using (un-prescribed) substances
Getting/ being high	Getting/being intoxicated, being under the influence
Abuse, misuse, inappropriate use, problem use	Use, At-risk or risky use, harmful use, hazardous use, unhealthy use
Moderate drinking/drug use	Low or lower risk use
Dirty / clean drug screen	Positive / negative drug screen
Drug seeking	Attempting to procure medications
Relapse, dirty, recidivism	Return to use, recurrence of use, exacerbation
Medication Assisted Treatment, Drug Treatment	Medication Treatment, medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD), medication for OUD, (or opioid agonist therapy)
“High” methadone dose	(stigmatizing when said to patients)
Newborn with (substance) addiction	Newborn with (substance) withdrawal/dependence/exposure

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