

Founded in 2007 by professionals with years of experience in opioid addiction treatment or research, now joined by patients and their families, with representation in 22 U.S. states and 5 countries, STOP STIGMA NOW (SSN) works to end the stigma that remains as the greatest barrier to recovery from opioid use disorder.

Our goal is to educate and inform the general public, the court systems, medical, nursing and counseling professions and the media about the overwhelming scientific evidence supporting the success of medication treatment for opioid use disorder.

By providing pertinent educational resources and information to government representatives, public officials, law enforcement agencies, health and human service organizations and the community-at-large we intend to counteract and ultimately eradicate the stigma associated with medication treatment for opioid use disorder.

SSN is an all-volunteer organization.  
JOIN US. Work with SSN. Contribute what you can.

Stop Stigma Now is an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization.  
All donations are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.



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**MEDICATION TREATMENT FOR  
OPIOID USE DISORDER SAVES LIVES**

[www.stopstigmanow.org](http://www.stopstigmanow.org)

# AMERICA IS EXPERIENCING AN OPIOID CRISIS OF EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS

## **WE MUST ...**

- ... STOP WITHHOLDING OUR LIFE-SAVING TREATMENT  
THE *ONLY* TREATMENT THAT PREVENTS OPIOID  
DEATHS: *MEDICATION TREATMENT.***
- ... START ENSURING ACCESS TO *EFFECTIVE*  
TREATMENT FOR OPIOID USE DISORDER.**
- ... REVERSE THE NEGATIVE PERCEPTION OF MEDICATION  
TREATMENT FOR OPIOID USE DISORDER.**

Opioid overdose is one of the greatest health crises in our history: a leading cause of death.<sup>\*1</sup> The U.S. has the highest drug death rate in the world.<sup>\*2</sup> Tragically, ineffective treatment is the norm. It is all that most U.S. residential treatment programs offer for opioid use disorder (OUD): psychosocial counseling without access to maintenance medication.<sup>\*3,4</sup> Those on effective (medication) treatment are often excluded from recovery services.<sup>\*5</sup>

Our failure to control skyrocketing overdose deaths is largely due to misunderstanding, discouraging and withholding the only effective treatment for most people with OUD ('medication stigma'). The most effective treatment has been falsely criticized as "substituting one addiction for another" and for being incompatible with recovery. This misunderstanding is the greatest barrier to the single most effective life-saving treatment: medications like methadone & buprenorphine - the only treatments of any kind ever shown to reduce opioid deaths.

The stigma against methadone has existed since 1965 when methadone became the first effective treatment for heroin addiction, the result of work by Drs. Vincent Dole, Marie Nyswander and Mary Jeanne Kreek at The Rockefeller University. Since then, misunderstanding about the treatment of OUD, and discrimination toward those who need it, has persisted in medical education, the criminal legal system, among patients, families, and even among many addiction treatment providers.

STOP STIGMA NOW develops and assembles clear and accurate print, electronic and other resources about the established scientific consensus on the role of medication for OUD, and disseminates these through presentations, advocacy and engagement with treatment and recovery providers, policy makers, health professionals, and the public, including people who use opioids and their families. (Please see [www.StopStigmaNow.org](http://www.StopStigmaNow.org)).

We address the tragic under-utilization of approved medication treatment, needed for the great majority of those seeking help for moderate to severe opioid use disorder. We thereby reduce needless suffering and death from fentanyl and other opioids.

We who have either worked in the field, or have lived experience, and have seen first-hand how effective these medications can be, have a responsibility to help remove the stigma that prevents effective treatment and recovery for so many.

#### \*REFERENCES:

1. Fentanyl is the leading cause of death among Americans between 18 – 45 years of age. <https://bit.ly/FentMortality10-2022>
2. The Commonwealth Fund. (which notes that low access to treatment is a possible cause) [www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2022/too-many-lives-lost-comparing-overdose-mortality-rates-policy-solutions](http://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2022/too-many-lives-lost-comparing-overdose-mortality-rates-policy-solutions)
3. Beetham T, et al.. Therapies Offered at Residential Addiction Treatment Programs in the United States. Research Letter August 25, 2020. JAMA. 2020; 324(8):804-806.
4. Huhn, AS et al. Differences in Availability and Use of Medications for Opioid Use Disorder in Residential Treatment Settings in the United States JAMA Netw Open. Feb 7, 2020; 3(2):e1920843. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2760443>
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