The Surgeon General recently issued a report, and in it, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy states that only a fraction of people with substance use disorders (SUD) get the treatment they need, and that more evidenced-based treatment, such as medication-assisted treatment (MAT), should be available. There are other problems as well, such as the spread of stigma through language that shames or condescends. Dr. Murthy states that we should “promote non-shaming language...for instance avoiding terms like ‘abuser’ or ‘addict’ when describing people with substance use disorders.” Beacon supports Dr. Murthy’s call to action by encouraging a non-shaming recovery-focused environment for all of the members we serve.

Below, see examples of...

Old Shaming Language

- “abuser, addict, user, junkie, crackhead, pill popper, tweaker, druggie, speed freak”
- “dirty” (“he’s dirty”)
- “he had a positive urine drug screen or a person who is currently using substances
- “detox” withdrawal management
- “clean & sober” in recovery
- “addiction” disease
- “clean” (“she’s clean”)
- her urine drug screen was negative or she is not currently using substances
- “substance abuse” substance use or substance use disorder
- “replacement therapy” or “substitution therapy” medication-assisted treatment

New Less Stigmatizing Language

- person with a substance use disorder
- “addiction” disease
- “substance use or substance use disorder
- “substitution therapy” or “medication-assisted treatment

Click here to view Surgeon General’s report.