REDUCING STIGMA

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STIGMA IS DEFINED AS:

- The experience of being ‘deeply discredited’ or marked due to one’s ‘undesired differentness’. To be stigmatized is to be held in contempt, shunned or rendered socially invisible because of a socially disapproved status.
STIGMA FROM INDIVIDUALS:

Occurs when individuals/the public develop and sustains negative stereotypes and assumptions about individuals; can be verbal or physical.

- Some examples:
  - Drug related - When people lock up their valuables when a drug user visits; calling people junkies; assumptions that health care providers make about drug users as aggressive or seeking drugs.
  - Non-Drug related –
    When people talk louder to blind people; not wanting touch people who are disabled or ill.
INSTITUTIONAL STIGMA:

• Occurs when assumptions and stereotypes are translated into public policy, practice and funding decisions.

• Some examples: Drug related – Treatment guidelines that exclude drug users (HCV); urine screening at methadone programs; hiring practices around drug use.

• Non-Drug related – Laws that impose criminal penalties on spitting by people who are HIV+; laws that limit the rights of gay men and lesbians; bathroom policies that exclude transgender individuals.
RACE

- Institutional Racism:
  - Harsher drug sentences for people of color vs white cocaine users
  - In 1986, before the enactment of federal mandatory minimum sentencing for crack cocaine offenses, the average federal drug sentence for African Americans was 11% higher than for whites. Four years later, the average federal drug sentence for African Americans was 49% higher
“Mandatory minimum” means just what it says: A person convicted of a first offense of possessing five grams of crack had to be sentenced to five years in federal prison. By contrast, under the 1986 Act a coke-snorting user had to be caught with 100 times that amount of powder cocaine (500 grams, or over a pound) in order to face a similar five-year mandatory minimum sentence.
ECONOMICS

• Impacts a person’s available resources for:
  • Insurance
  • Access to services
  • Housing
The poverty rate among African Americans is high. The **socioeconomic issues** associated with poverty—including limited access to high-quality health care, housing, and HIV prevention education—directly and indirectly increase the risk for HIV infection and affect the health of people living with and at risk for HIV. These factors may explain why African Americans have worse outcomes on the **HIV continuum of care**, including lower rates of linkage to care and viral suppression.
PERSONAL ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING DRUG USE

- What are your personal beliefs about people who use drugs?
- Do you have a bias based on the type of drugs and method of use?
- Do you judge a person of color’s pain level differently?
REFERENCES

Sources: CDC. Estimated HIV incidence and prevalence in the United States 2010–2016

Drug Policy Alliance ; Drug Use and Stigma

REFERENCES

• The Office of National Drug Control Policy
  Harm Reduction Coalition
• Crack vs Powder Cocaine: One Drug, Two Penalties: By Deborah C. England
• Drug Policy Alliance