

# Substance Abuse. It's treatable. Talk About It.



## CPP Substance Use Disorder/ Co-Occurring Disorder (SUD/COD) Social Norming Campaign

The Santa Cruz County Alcohol and Drug (AOD) Program Strategic Plan for Substance Use Treatment and Intervention Services outlines a comprehensive plan to increase prevention, intervention and treatment of Substance Use Disorder. Santa Cruz County pays a high cost for untreated substance use, approximately \$208 million is spent annually, on public safety, incarceration and emergency services. And with 22,000 citizens diagnosed but not treated, the social fabric of our community is weakened by the decreased capacity of its community members to participate in the work force, family systems, and safe neighborhoods. The AOD Strategic Plan outlines recommendations that support the creation of a safe and healthy community where individuals and families thrive in a supportive environment with enhanced quality of life.

The first barrier to overcome was the stigma associated with SUD/COD. Research notes that stigmatization of illness and lack of accurate information about an illness are barriers to connecting to and maintaining engagement in treatment and ongoing recovery maintenance management (SAMHSA, 2004). Stigma may include self-stigma, perceived stigma by others, or veritable stigma imposed by others, including family, friends, community, and/or individuals who are part of the system of care experience. Evidence shows that this confounds efforts to:

- a) **identify, engage and retain individuals into intervention, treatment and/or support services,**
- b) **match individuals to appropriate treatment types/levels,**
- c) **provide high caliber quality services,**
- d) **promote public understanding.**

Best practices to effectively manage chronic diseases, such as SUD/COD, include widespread public anti-stigma initiatives that: promote fact-based information about nature of the illness, debunk myths and misunderstandings, and share resources that encourage active response to addressing the health needs of self and others.

The SUD/COD Social Norming Media campaign is an effort to shift the community to support sound and compassionate approaches to SUD/COD needs and adequate resources in order to minimize costly consequences. It also aims to improve community attitudes regarding substance use and related issues.

*What does success look like?*

- 1.1 Reduced stigma associated with SUD/COD, including an increase in sister agencies' and other partners' capacity to demonstrate services/supports that are sound and compassionate approaches to SUD/COD needs.
- 1.2 Increased community support for adequacy and parity of SUD/COD resources.

*Action Steps*

- Inform community
- Motivate community for cultural shift
- Communicate the negative impacts of untreated SUD/COD to the community regarding public safety, loss of income, cost of treatment, family stability etc.
- Increase assessments and resources
- Respond to narratives around specific incidents
- Promote accurate information
- Debunk myths
- Create an understanding of how to respond appropriately and effectively.
- Enhance access to available services

