

# Challenging Structural Substance Use Stigma

## In-Person Workshop

### Syllabus

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## Background

In 2020, the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) launched its project, Normalizing Conversations, that aims to build the knowledge and capacity of decision-makers, health and social service providers, public safety and communities to implement a public health approach to substance use. As part of the project, CPHA conducted focus groups and key informant interviews on implementing a public health approach to substance use. After these consultations, CPHA hosted knowledge exchange forums with partners to identify community needs and ways in which the project can address them. Stigma within the healthcare system, specifically structural stigma, was identified as a key barrier to address.

This community engagement led CPHA to partner with CAPSA, a national organization of people with lived and living experience (PWLLE) of substance use, leading the discussion of stigma and its effects, to develop a workshop addressing structural substance use stigma. Additional partners at the Manitoba Harm Reduction Network, Thunder Bay Drug Strategy, and Mainline Needle Exchange were instrumental in the development of the workshop materials and supporting the pilot process.

For more information about these engagement activities, read the [Focus Group Report](#) [here](#) and the [Community Assessment Reports](#) [here](#).

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## Purpose and Learning Objectives

This workshop aims to provide a learning opportunity for health and social service providers who work with PWUD or provide substance use health services. At the end of this workshop, participants will have a:

1. Strengthened understanding of the various forms of stigma and factors that contribute to structural substance use related stigma;
2. Strengthened understanding of why people with lived and living experience have an essential role in the healthcare system, including policy and program decisions;
3. Strengthened ability to assess stigmatizing policies, programs, or practices and engage in advocacy to reduce stigma, specifically structural stigma.

## Workshop Overview

**Format:** In-person workshop

**Length:** 7 hours (delivered in one or two sessions)

**Target Audience:** professionals working in the substance use health field

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## Workshop Design

This workshop was designed utilizing transformational and action-oriented learning theories to encourage participants to disrupt and examine their attitudes and approaches towards substance use and implement these changes in their practice. The first section of the workshop provides participants with an overview of stigma, its impacts on PWUD, and how it manifests in social systems, using real world examples shared by PWUD. Participants will have opportunities to reflect on their own experiences and engage in group discussions. The second section of the workshop encourages participants to explore ways to support and advocate for PWUD at the individual, program, community, and system levels. The workshop's final section emphasizes the importance of meaningful partnership with PWLLE and provides participants with best practices for meaningfully working with PWLLE as well as real-life examples of such partnerships.

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## Materials

The key materials needed to facilitate this workshop are separated in three folders:

1. **Planning This Workshop:** Onboarding, Timeline, Syllabus
2. **Promoting This Workshop:** Communications, Registration and Email Templates, Pre- and Post-Surveys
3. **Delivering This Workshop:** Agenda, Facilitator Manual, Workshop Slides, Participant Workbook

These materials will provide facilitators with the necessary resources to plan, promote, and deliver the workshop. The participant workbook will support participants' learning during and after the workshop. Facilitators should be familiar with this workbook and ensure ensure digital or printed copies are provided.

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## Activities

Activities include a group word cloud, videos, individual reflections, and group discussions, specifically designed to explore the factors that contribute to and maintain structural substance use stigma. Tools to support these activities may include flip charts and markers, printed worksheets, or smart boards.

Case scenarios are used throughout the workshop to encourage participants to critically reflect on stigmatizing policies and practices they may encounter within their work. They aim to help participants apply concepts such as harm reduction, substance use health, and meaningful partnership when faced with stigmatizing situations.

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