

# FAQs

HOW DO I RESPOND  
WHEN I HEAR PEOPLE SAY  
STIGMATIZING THINGS LIKE...

FOR EXAMPLE...

## **“WHY SHOULD WE HELP PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS?”**

People use substances for a variety of complex reasons. For some, it's recreational. For others, it's in response to physical or emotional trauma. Problematic substance use should be treated as a health issue, not a moral issue. We would never judge or deny care to a person with diabetes who ate a donut, and we shouldn't do the same to people who use drugs.

## **“I THINK IT'S WRONG THAT MY TAXPAYER DOLLARS ARE GOING TOWARDS HELPING DRUG USERS.”**

Addressing substance use is part of a complete public health approach—just like investing in vaccinations, disease outbreaks, and preventing chronic illnesses. By helping and supporting people who use drugs, we're supporting the health of our entire population, reducing avoidable deaths, and preventing the spread of illnesses like HIV and hepatitis C. Investing in the health of our population benefits everyone. Prevention is significantly more cost effective than treatment.



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BCCDC HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

## **“I DON’T THINK WE SHOULD BE SUPPORTING HARM REDUCTION, TREATMENT IS THE ONLY SOLUTION!”**

Treatment isn’t the goal for everybody. Some people will continue to, and can, manage their substance use long-term and lead productive lives. For people who will consider and access treatment, they have to be alive to do that. We need to focus on making sure people aren’t dying before we think about treatment.

## **“HOW CAN USING BETTER LANGUAGE CHANGE ANYTHING? HOW DOES “ANTI-STIGMA” LANGUAGE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?”**

People around you—your friends and family members—may be using substances and not telling you. If in conversation you talk about “junkies” and use judgmental language, they’ll likely be less willing to come to you for help if they need it. You never know who might be listening and what their experience might be. Acting with compassion and respect opens the door to making sure people are safe. Stigmatizing language closes that door. Changing prejudice, discrimination and stigma on a larger scale must begin at an individual level.

