



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Nov. 25, 2019

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MDHHS launches statewide media campaign in fight against opioids, harmful stigmas

Michigan residents to learn about the stigmas associated with opioid use disorder

LANSING, Mich. – Changing hopeless to hopefulness, desperate to deserving and criticism to compassion. A newly launched statewide advertising campaign is seeking to change the conversation about opioid use disorder in Michigan.

With increased medical understanding and the 17-times increase in opioid overdose deaths since 1999, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is working to address the stigmas associated with opioid use so that residents will be better supported and directed to treatment.

As awareness around the opioid crisis has grown, our understanding of addiction – specifically opioid use – has evolved. Opioid “addiction,” which was once thought of as an issue associated with “addicts” or “junkies,” is now recognized as the body’s development of a physical reliance on opiates: opioid use disorder.

“Opioid use disorder is not a moral failing. It is a chronic condition just like diabetes and high blood pressure,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health for MDHHS. “It is absolutely imperative that we change the words we use and the way we think when it comes to opioid use disorder in order to truly support our loved ones in accessing treatment and a full recovery.”

Common stigmas associated with opioid use disorder include the “not the type” stigma, where friends and family may not recognize signs of an opioid addiction. Or the stigmatizing belief that an addict is actively deciding to abuse opioids, rather than the understanding that his or her body has become physically reliant. Perhaps even the stigma that opioids are bad, discouraging those in need of legitimate pain management from getting proper treatment.

Whatever the stigma, through this campaign Michigan residents will be educated about the real truth behind opioid use, who it impacts, signs a loved one may need support, and how to help them into treatment and recovery.

The \$1 million campaign is funded by the State Opioid Response federal grant to change the script about opioid use disorder treatment and encourage Michiganders to seek treatment to help improve their lives and ultimately prevent overdoses.

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In order to get more people with opioid use disorder into treatment, it's vital that family members and peers help change the conversation about treatment to reduce the stigma around receiving recovery services for opioid misuse.

The statewide campaign is aimed at adults and parents of teenagers and was built using Michigan opioid use disorder data and focus group research about the stigmas and messages people hear about opioids. Featuring TV, radio, billboards, social media posts, paid Google search, and mobile ads, the campaign runs through April 2020.

Residents can visit Michigan.gov/Opioids for information about programs and resources for treatment and care without the stigmatization often associated with seeking help for opioid use disorder.

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