



News

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DMHAS Announces Campaign to Address Stigma Associated with Opioid Use Disorder

Partnership with Shatterproof to implement statewide evidence-based addiction stigma reduction campaign

HARTFORD, CT (September 12, 2022) – Today, the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) announced a partnership with Shatterproof, a nationally-recognized nonprofit dedicated to transforming addiction treatment and ending stigma, to implement a statewide stigma reduction campaign. Stigma is a well-known barrier to treatment for those with opioid use disorders (OUD), and has directly contributed to the national overdose crisis. Many people with OUD avoid or delay seeking treatment due to concerns about being treated differently or fears of losing their jobs and livelihood. This is because stigma, prejudice, and discrimination against people with OUD is still very much a problem.

DMHAS, in partnership with Shatterproof, will embark on a multi-pronged, evidence-based, initiative in Connecticut to assess current levels of addiction stigma and awareness of current addiction stigma efforts, and provide tailored education to the general public and key stakeholders to reduce addiction stigma. The campaign will utilize an evidence-based messaging approach to help change attitudes associated with substance use and OUD, commencing with a webinar entitled *“The Palpable Impact of Language on Individuals, Families and Communities Challenged by Addiction”* presented by Gatespring Consulting. Gatespring will address the significant impact damaging and unfair language has made on individuals, families and communities challenged by substance use disorders. The webinar will take place on Wednesday, September 14, 2022 and will explore how to reverse the tide by using language that heals, empowers and ensures the fair and equal treatment of those simply requiring the appropriate level of medical and behavioral healthcare.

According to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, in Connecticut there were 1,531 confirmed overdose deaths in 2021, an increase of 11.4% compared to the previous year. 93% of overdose deaths involved an opioid (e.g., fentanyl, heroin, or a prescription opioid pain reliever).

“As the number of overdoses in Connecticut has continued to rise, it is clear we need a messaging strategy that addresses stigma. Stigma is a powerful obstacle to individuals seeking care; if we can eradicate stigma and discrimination we can save lives,” said Nancy Navarretta, Commissioner of DMHAS. “Innovative public-private partnerships are vital in addressing the complexities of the opioid crisis. By working together and joining efforts, we can make a difference and support individuals in their recovery.”

As part of the campaign, the attitudes and knowledge of Connecticut residents regarding Substance Use Disorder and treatment services will be assessed. Changes in stigma will be re-evaluated at the close of the campaign in 2023. The campaign will also focus on community outreach and education and will include webinars on a variety of topics related to OUD, treatment, and various drivers of stigma. The first webinar event, *The Palpable Impact of Language on Individuals, Families and Communities Challenged by Addiction* will take place Wednesday, September 14, 2022 at 12:00 p.m. Registration details are available at <https://bit.ly/ImpactOfLanguage>.

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Shatterproof

[Shatterproof](https://www.Shatterproof.org) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reversing the addiction crisis in the United States. Shatterproof harnesses the models of business, the rigor of science and the power of a national movement to create change and save lives through three pillars of work: revolutionizing the addiction treatment system, breaking down addiction-related stigmas and supporting and empowering our communities. To learn more visit www.Shatterproof.org.

Gatespring

Gatespring Consulting was founded in June 2019 by Scott Luetgenau. Scott is in long-term recovery and is a Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialist with extensive experience overseeing comprehensive, multi-disciplinary/integrated Opioid Treatment Programs and Office-Based Addiction Treatment clinics. In 2022, Gatespring Therapy and Gatespring Learning were launched to further support clinical and workforce development needs nationally. In recent years, Gatespring Consulting has provided curriculum development and training services to national organizations, non-profits, and substance use professionals on a range of evidence based topics, including recovery leadership, medication assisted treatment, risk management, auditing preparedness & workforce wellness/retention.