

# WORDS CAN HEAL

Here are six steps you can follow to help end the stigma of mental illness:

1. **Learn More.** Many organizations sponsor nationwide programs about mental health and mental illness. Call the Knowledge Exchange Network at (800) 789-CMHS(2647).
2. **Insist on accountable media.** Sometimes the media portray people who have mental illnesses inaccurately, and this makes stereotypes harder to change.
3. **Obey the laws in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).** The ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life, including housing, employment, and public transportation. Mental illnesses are considered a disability covered under the ADA.
4. **Recognize and appreciate the contributions to society made by people who have mental illnesses.** People who have mental illnesses are major contributors to American life- from the arts to the sciences, from medicine to entertainment to professional sports.
5. **Treat people with the dignity and respect we all deserve.** People who have mental illnesses may include your friends, your neighbors, and your family.
6. **Think about the person-the contents behind the label.** Avoid labeling people by their diagnosis. Instead of saying, "She's a schizophrenic," say, "She has a mental illness." Never use the term "mentally ill."

Persons who are interested in obtaining further information may contact South Dakota Advocacy Services. All offices can be reached by e-mail at [www.sdadvocacy.com](http://www.sdadvocacy.com) or by calling:

**1-800-658-4782**

**SD Advocacy Services**  
**1719 Broadway, Ste. B-2**  
Yankton, SD 57078  
(605) 665-5616

**SD Advocacy Services**  
**1575 LaCrosse, Ste. K**  
Rapid City, SD 57701  
(605) 342-3808

**SD Advocacy Services**  
**2121 W. 63<sup>rd</sup> Pl., Ste. 30**  
Sioux Falls, SD 57108  
(605) 361-7438

**SD Advocacy Services**  
**221 South Central Avenue**  
Pierre, SD 57501  
(605) 224-8294 or  
1-800-658-4782 (voice or TDD)

*Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,  
Center for Mental Health Services.*

Revised 7/2006



*Assisting South Dakotans with Disabilities*

## KNOW THE FACTS

# STIGMA OF MENTAL ILLNESS

SDAS thanks the Center for Mental Health Services for the information included in this publication.

**A Publication of  
Protection & Advocacy  
for Individuals with Mental Illness  
(PAIMI) Program  
A component program of  
South Dakota Advocacy Services  
1-800-658-4782 (Voice or TDD)**

## ANTI-STIGMA

Stigma is not just the use of the wrong word or action. Stigma is about disrespect. It is the use of negative labels to identify a person living with mental illness. Stigma is a barrier and discourages individuals and their families from getting the help they need due to the fear of being discriminated against. An estimated 50 million Americans experience a mental disorder in any given year and only one-fourth of them actually receive mental health and other services.

## STIGMA WEBSITES

[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/stigma](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/stigma)  
[www.nmha.org/newsroom/stigma/index.cfm](http://www.nmha.org/newsroom/stigma/index.cfm)  
[www.mentalhealthstigma.org](http://www.mentalhealthstigma.org)  
[www.adscenter.org](http://www.adscenter.org)  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

## DID YOU KNOW THAT

- ◆ An estimated 50 million Americans experience a mental disorder in any given year?
- ◆ Stigma is not just the use of the wrong word or action?
- ◆ Stigma is about disrespect, and that stigma is about the use of negative labels to identify a person living with mental illness?
- ◆ Stigma is a barrier and discourages individuals and their families from getting the help they need due to the fear of being discriminated against?
- ◆ Many people would rather tell employers they have committed a petty crime and were in jail, than admit to being in a psychiatric hospital?
- ◆ Stigma results in inadequate insurance coverage for mental health services?
- ◆ Stigma results in fear, mistrust, and violence against people living with mental illness?
- ◆ Stigma results in families and friends turning their backs on people with mental illness?
- ◆ Stigma keeps people from getting needed mental health services?

## DO'S

**Do use** respectful language such as:

Person who has schizophrenia

Person with a psychiatric disability

Person with bipolar disorder

## DON'T'S

**Don't portray** successful persons

with disabilities as super human.

**Don't use** generic labels such as

retarded or the mentally ill.

**Don't use** terms like crazy, lunatic,

manic-depressive, slow

functioning, or normal.