



# Mecosta County Stigma Assessment & Response Project



**District Health  
Department #10**  
*Healthy People, Healthy Communities*



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# Presentation Overview

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## Introduction

Project introduction and  
timeline

2

## Data Walk

Data collection process  
and results

3

## Addressing Stigma

Identifying next steps of this  
project and how to create change  
and reduce stigma in our  
communities.

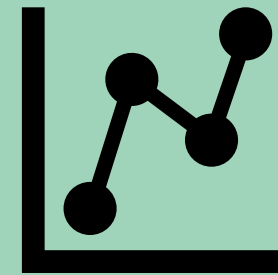
# Project Purpose

Assess the prevalence of stigma regarding substance use disorder in specific subpopulations in Mecosta County in partnership with MOSAC. The assessment will help to inform effective and targeted interventions to reduce the impact of stigma and improve outcomes for people experiencing SUDs.

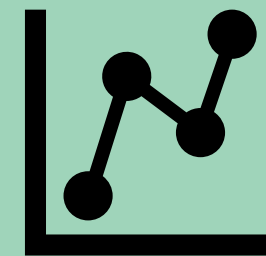
WHAT WE KNOW:



Addressing substance use disorders in Mecosta County is urgent



In 2023, there were 5 overdose deaths in Mecosta County (MDHHS MOTA Dashboard, 2024)



In 2023, there were 94 overdose emergency health care visits in Mecosta County (MDHHS MOTA Dashboard, 2024)

# Implementation Steps



01

## Funding

Received funding from The Mecosta county Opioid Settlement for a project to assess and address stigma regarding SUDs in Mecosta County.



02

## Develop Surveys

Developed a public stigma assessment tool, healthcare provider tool, law enforcement/first responder tool, and self-stigma assessment tool.



03

## Distribute Survey 1&2

Distributed the public stigma and healthcare assessment tool in June-July 2024.



04

## Distribute Additional Surveys

Distributed the self-stigma and law enforcement/first responder assessment tool beginning in mid July 2024. Open until August

# DATA: Public Assessment



We had 198 respondents across Mecosta and Osceola Counties. Respondents answered 30 questions (including demographic questions) virtually on the Alchemer Platform. The assessment was distributed June 24-July 15, 2024. It was promoted on social media and through various networks.



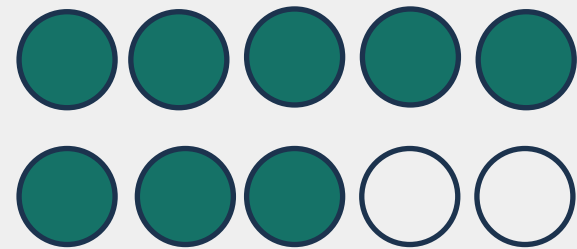
**Demographics:** 78.8% of respondents were from Mecosta County and 27.% were from Osceola County. 88.9% were females, the average age range was 35-44 years old, and 97% identified as white.



# DATA: Public Assessment

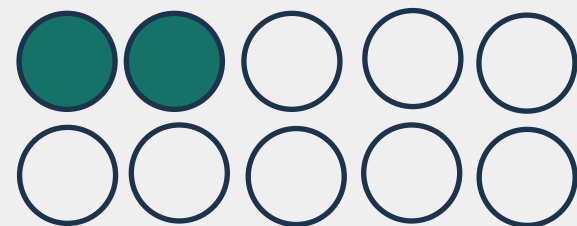
Have you ever had a family member or close friend who currently or previously had a problem with SUD?

Yes



8 out of 10 respondents answered yes

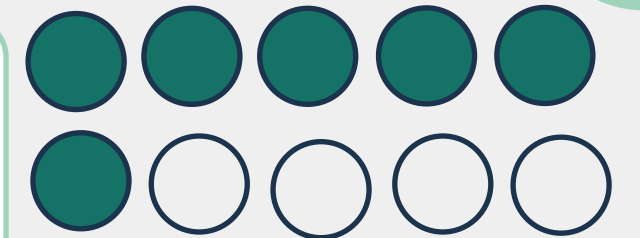
No



2 out of 10 respondents answered no

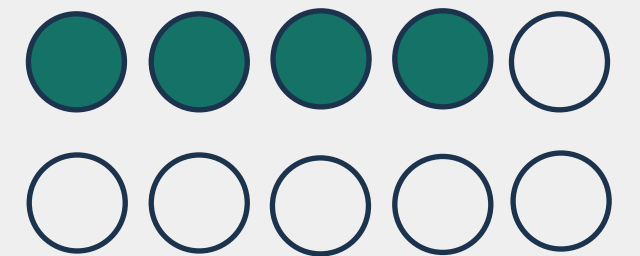
Have you ever had a family member or close friend who has faced stigma or discrimination due to a SUD?

Yes



6 out of 10 respondents answered yes

No



4 out of 10 respondents answered no

# DATA: Public Assessment

Most people would be willing to accept someone who has been treated for substance use disorder as a close friend.

37% Agree

63% Disagree

Most people would believe that someone who has been treated for substance use disorder are trustworthy.

16% Agree

84% Disagree

Most people in my community believe that a person who uses substances is to blame for their own problems.

88% Agree

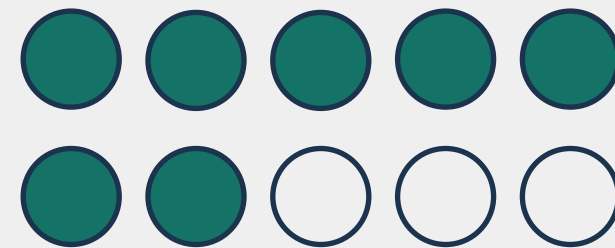
12% Disagree



# DATA: Public Assessment

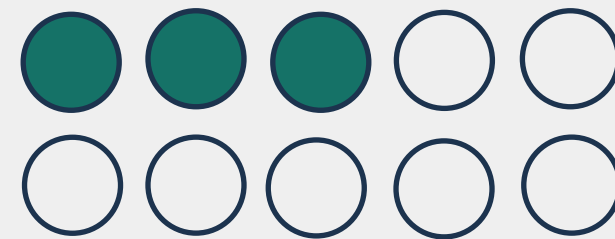
Substance use disorder is a chronic condition like diabetes

Yes



7 out of 10 respondents answered yes

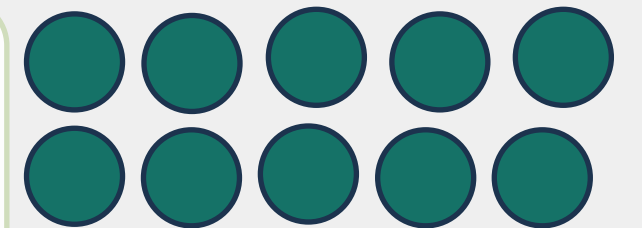
No



3 out of 10 respondents answered no

People with a substance use disorder can, with treatment, get well and return to productive lives.

Yes



10 out of 10 respondents answered yes

No

Only 19  
respondents  
did not know  
someone  
with an SUD

167  
respondents  
did know  
someone  
with an SUD

# Data: Public Assessment

## Support Harm Reduction Strategies

- 88.8% Strongly Support or Somewhat Support

## Support Safe Consumption Sites

- 75.5% Strongly Support or Somewhat Support

## Support Syringe Service Programs

- 54.8% Strongly Support or Somewhat Support

## Support Needle Distribution Programs

- 71.7% Strongly Support or Somewhat Support

# Public Assessment – Open Ended

## Responses

“This is a public health crisis, and the stigma for these individuals needs to be addressed.”

“Encouraging individuals to seek help without fear of judgment, and ensuring access to evidence-based treatment and care is crucial”

“Substance use stigma is the real reason the opioid epidemic continues to spread. Refusal to allow the things that help those suffering from addiction (safe consumption sites, needle exchanges, free naloxone) because of fear it will cause more drug use and crime in their community is what causes more drug use and crime. Harm reduction saves lives.”

# Harm Reduction Video



# Mecosta County SUD Stigma Assessment and Response Project

Reducing the  
Stigma

What message stood  
out to you after  
watching this video?





# Next Steps:



**Develop Social  
Media Campaign**



**Host Healthcare  
Providers  
Education**



**Develop Law  
Enforcement/First  
Responder Toolkit**



# Reducing the Stigma of Substance Use Disorders

A hand is shown from the bottom, holding a small, glowing globe. The background is a soft, out-of-focus sunset with warm orange and yellow tones. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

Saying goodbye to hurtful,  
stigmatizing language.

The words we use communicate our attitudes, biases and stereotypes.

# Reducing the Stigma

## **Words Matter!**

**What words come to mind that people use to describe someone with a SUD?**

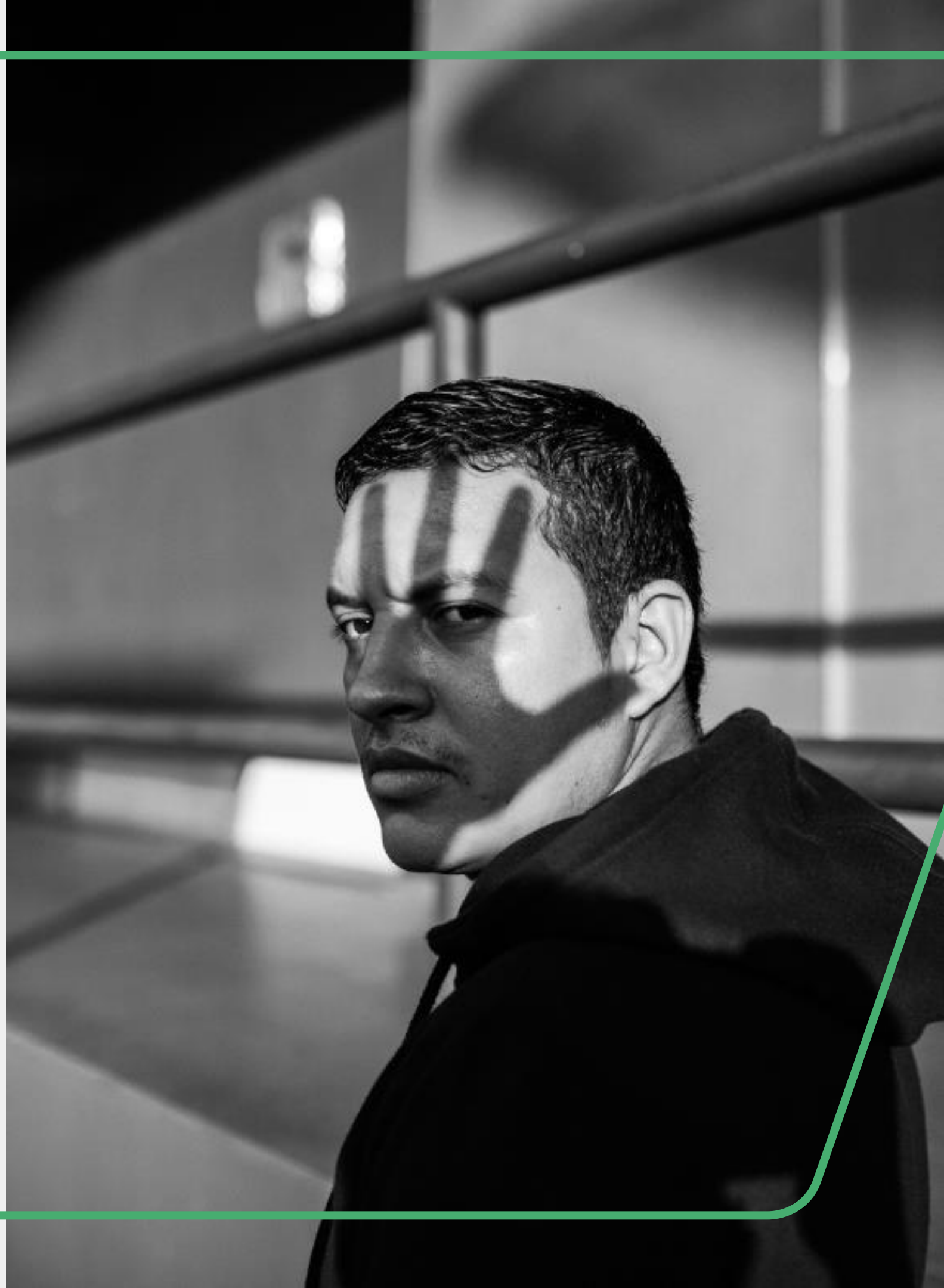


# Reducing the Stigma

## What is stigma?

Stigma is a strong feeling of disapproval about somebody, especially when it is unfair to feel this way. It can lead to:

- Stereotypes: Generalized belief; “People with mental illness are violent”
- Prejudice: Judgement based on that belief; “They’re violent, I’m scared and don’t want anything to do with them”
- Discrimination: Action based off those judgements and beliefs; “ I won’t hire or rent to a person with mental illness because I’m scared of them”





# Reducing the Stigma

## Different types of stigma:

### Self-stigma

- Accepting and internalizing negative stereotypes about oneself.

### Public Stigma

- Negative attitudes and fears that isolate those with addiction.

### Stigma Against Medication

- Belief that medications “trade one addiction for another”.

### Structural Stigma

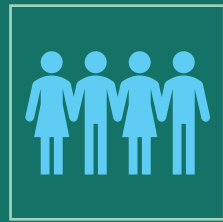
- Excluding those with addiction from opportunities and resources.





# Reducing the Stigma

How can we make change?



Change language use to change culture



Changing culture through education



Changing people and environments through advocacy



# Reducing the Stigma

**Making a difference:**

What are some specific actions you can take to make change to reduce stigma in your organization and/or communities?

# Conclusion

To get involved or learn more, please contact:

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