

IHI Open School Recover Hope Campaign

Action Area #1: Change the Narrative

The Urgent Challenge: Stigma, blame, and shame

The shame and stigma surrounding substance use disorders leads people who are suffering to feel isolated, hopeless, and unable to share their experiences with others who could support them towards recovery. Societal perceptions of people with substance use disorders as “addicts” engaging in criminal and immoral behavior creates an environment that blames people for their problems rather than seeking to help them, reinforcing harmful power dynamics and marginalizing a vulnerable population. In health care, the consequence of seeing substance use disorders as a choice rather than as a chronic disease that can be successfully treated is deadly, for patients fail to receive the care they desperately need. Changing the narrative from despair to hope and replacing judgment and shame with empathy, compassion, and love, will save lives and restore justice to the way we prevent and treat substance use disorders.

Our Response: Change the Narrative

How can we change the narrative as part of the Recover Hope campaign?

We’re committed to supporting projects that involve storytelling to raise awareness of the challenges and complexity of substance use disorders, reduce stigma and shame, and promote person-first, recovery-focused language that emphasizes compassion, empathy, and hope.

Stories are humanizing, offering an opportunity for people to build connections in an authentic, meaningful way. By building storytelling into the campaign, we invite individuals to shape a new narrative – to use their voices and experiences to confront power dynamics and challenge inaccurate or incomplete understandings or stereotypes of substance use disorders. Sharing the stories of people affected by substance use disorders offers a personal and complex portrayal of issues instead of one that perpetuates stigma. Sharing experiences, struggles, and hope can motivate people to act as agents of change.

Your Choice Now: Lead a Project

Explore this list of project ideas as a starting point for leading change. This list is by no means comprehensive; there are many ways to Change the Narrative. The important thing is to get started and improve as you go!

The IHI Open School Pledge-A-Thon was a friendly student-led competition across the IHI Open School Chapter Network to support a campaign in 2014-2015, in which Chapters challenged each other to collect pledges to take action to improve population health. Take inspiration from this example to spread the IHI Open School Recover Hope Campaign Change the Narrative pledge at your campus and in your community and invite others to join you.

Boston Resilient: Narratives of Hope Amidst Boston’s Opioid Epidemic, a project led by an interprofessional team of students at Harvard Medical School’s Center for Primary Care, is a collection of photo portraits and quotes from the people of Boston whose lives have been touched by the opioid epidemic that explores the complex medical, policy, and societal challenges posed by the opioid crisis and captures the narrative of hope that parallels the narrative of tragedy. The project celebrates the strengths and resources of the Boston community, highlights concepts critical to tackling stigma, empowers diverse stakeholders at the center of the epidemic and recognizes their promising work, and creates an opportunity for

students and trainees to learn about the challenges of addressing the opioid epidemic and participate in different ways of engaging with members of the community.

The project involves training health care professional students to identify community members, conduct semi-structured interviews with and take portrait photographs of participants, and reflect on the experience. The portraits and interviews are then curated into a cohesive visual exhibit that is publicly displayed, portraying the resilience and hope of the Boston community in the face of the opioid epidemic. Email openschool@ihi.org for resources to start your own storytelling project.

Art With Impact is a mental health organization that reduces stigma about mental health through film. The organization trains students and others to create short films to share personal stories related to mental health and empower people experiencing mental health challenges. Learn more at www.artwithimpact.org

The Stand Up and Speak Out School Speaking Program

from the organization Rise Together educates, engages, and empowers students to share their stories to eliminate the stigma around bullying, self-harm, suicide, drugs, and alcohol. Learn more at www.weallrisetogether.org

Sharing narratives to set your IHI Open School Chapter's vision is a powerful way to connect with the values and experiences that bring your Chapter members to your shared work around substance use disorders. Visit the IHI Open School blog to learn how the Suffolk University Chapter used public narrative to design their strategy for their semester of activities.

Ways to Get Started

1. **Take the Change the Narrative Campaign Pledge** to replace the use of stigmatizing language with person-first, recovery-focused language and encourage peers to do the same
2. **Plan a Chapter Meeting** to share your stories of how you have been personally affected by the opioid epidemic or other substance use disorders, and build from those experiences to design local action.
3. **Plan an event** to empower fellow students to share their stories and break the silence on unhealthy substance use on campus or the surrounding community
4. **Launch a social media effort** to share stories of hope and recovery to change the narrative on substance use disorders

Leverage Open School resources to strengthen your project:

- **Visit the Chapter Map** to find and connect with an IHI Open School Chapter near you
- **Download the Chapter Leader Toolkit** to start a Chapter at your university or organization
- **Take our quality improvement courses** to learn to design a strong improvement project
- **Join the Leadership & Organizing for Change course** in March 2019 to learn to launch your campaign project and meaningfully engage others in your vision for change
- **Get inspired by the IHI Open School blog**, which highlights Chapters' work to engage their peers in health improvement efforts
- **Explore videos and activities** to learn concepts and tools to strengthen your projects
- **Email openschool@ihi.org** to receive coaching on how to get started

www.IHI.org/OpenSchool