



Guidance for Using Non-Stigmatizing Imagery for Substance Use Disorders and Justice Involvement



ABOUT THIS REPORT

Addiction Policy Forum created this report with support from the Justice Community Opioid Innovation Network. The publication includes recommendation informed by interviews with individuals in recovery from substance use disorders and justice involvement.

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UNDERSTANDING STIGMA

Stigma results from a social process where certain marks are constructed as indicators of a tarnished character. In turn, these features are used to justify discrimination toward and power loss of people with that mark (Goffman 1963).

According to Dr. Valerie Earnshaw at the University of Delaware,

“Stigma manifests itself structurally, through societal conditions and social norms; through individual perceivers, those who discriminate or perpetuate stereotypes of the stigma; and through individual targets, those living with the stigmatized characteristic.”

In the case of substance use disorder (SUD), individuals with SUD who experience stigma are more likely to continue engaging in substance use potentially as a way to cope with the stigma they are facing (Tsai 2019). Stigma serves to create barriers to treatment access and higher rates of treatment dropout (Corrigan 2006). For individuals experiencing stigma related to criminal justice involvement, greater psychological distress and decreased self-esteem (Turney 2013) and greater social isolation are present (Moore 2015).

Interventions to address stigma have shown to be effective in other disease spaces such as HIV and mental illness, and can be applied to SUD. Dr. Ben Howell (Yale University) explains:

“While criminal justice and substance use stigma are deeply ingrained in our society, there are several means of intervention. When policies are created around stigma structurally, there are positive outcomes at the individual level. Perceivers of stigma also hold the power to intervene, by continuing contact with stigmatized individuals, framing their language in a non-stigmatizing way and educating themselves.”

CHANGING IMAGERY

Modifying imagery and language used to describe and represent individuals with a substance use disorder or criminal justice involvement is an intervention that researchers, institutions and other perceivers can implement. Stigmatizing imagery can contribute to the stereotypes of addiction, and potentially trigger trauma or relapse among individuals in recovery from a substance use disorder or involvement in the justice system.

This publication details recommendations for images to use and images to avoid in publication and materials. The guidance in this publication is informed by a focus group conducted by JCOIN's Coordination and Translation Center (CTC) in December 2020, and interviews with individuals with lived experience with substance use disorder and criminal justice involvement.

ABOUT JCOIN

Led by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and funded through the NIH HEAL InitiativeSM, JCOIN is a groundbreaking initiative designed to advance scientific knowledge on effective policies, practices, and interventions, and expand their use into daily practice within health and justice settings.



LAW
ENFORCEMENT



LAW ENFORCEMENT IMAGERY

When building materials for law enforcement related content, consider the following guidance.

Imagery to Use

- Photos of police cars, sirens, or police stations **without individuals** in frame
- Include a police officer without other individuals in the image

Imagery to Avoid

- People being arrested, in handcuffs, or altercations with police

"Anyone in handcuffs-- that's not their best day. It's not the right way to portray individuals going into the criminal justice system or with substance use disorders."

- Individual with Lived Experience





COURTS

COURTS AND JUDICIAL IMAGERY

"The pictures and the imagery send a whole other negative message and triggers a lot of emotions around unfair sentencing and unfair representation."

- Individual with Lived Experience

Imagery to Use

- Empty courtrooms
- A gavel
- The scales of justice

Imagery to Avoid

- People in courtrooms and individuals in handcuffs
- A judge, district attorney or other professional without defendants in the image



PRISONS AND JAILS



PRISON AND JAIL IMAGERY

Imagery to Use

- An empty common areas
- A modern cell without bars

Imagery to Avoid

- Bars and rows of cells
- Individuals behind bars or jumpsuits
- Hands on bars
- Images that include barbed wire

“There's just something really brutal about the rows and rows [of cells], it's pretty dehumanizing.”

- Individual with Lived Experience



An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood with numerous houses, trees, and streets. A large brown rectangular overlay is positioned in the upper right quadrant, containing the text 'REENTRY, PROBATION AND PAROLE' in white, uppercase letters. Below the text is a short white horizontal line.

REENTRY, PROBATION AND PAROLE

IMAGERY OF REENTRY, PROBATION AND PAROLE

The broad scope of services and personnel for reentry, probation and parole can cover a variety of images from reentry into the community to case management and participant engagement. Guidance for imagery for this category includes:

Imagery to Use

- Roads and pathways with hopeful coloring
- Doors opening with a hopeful theme
- Abstract images of the community

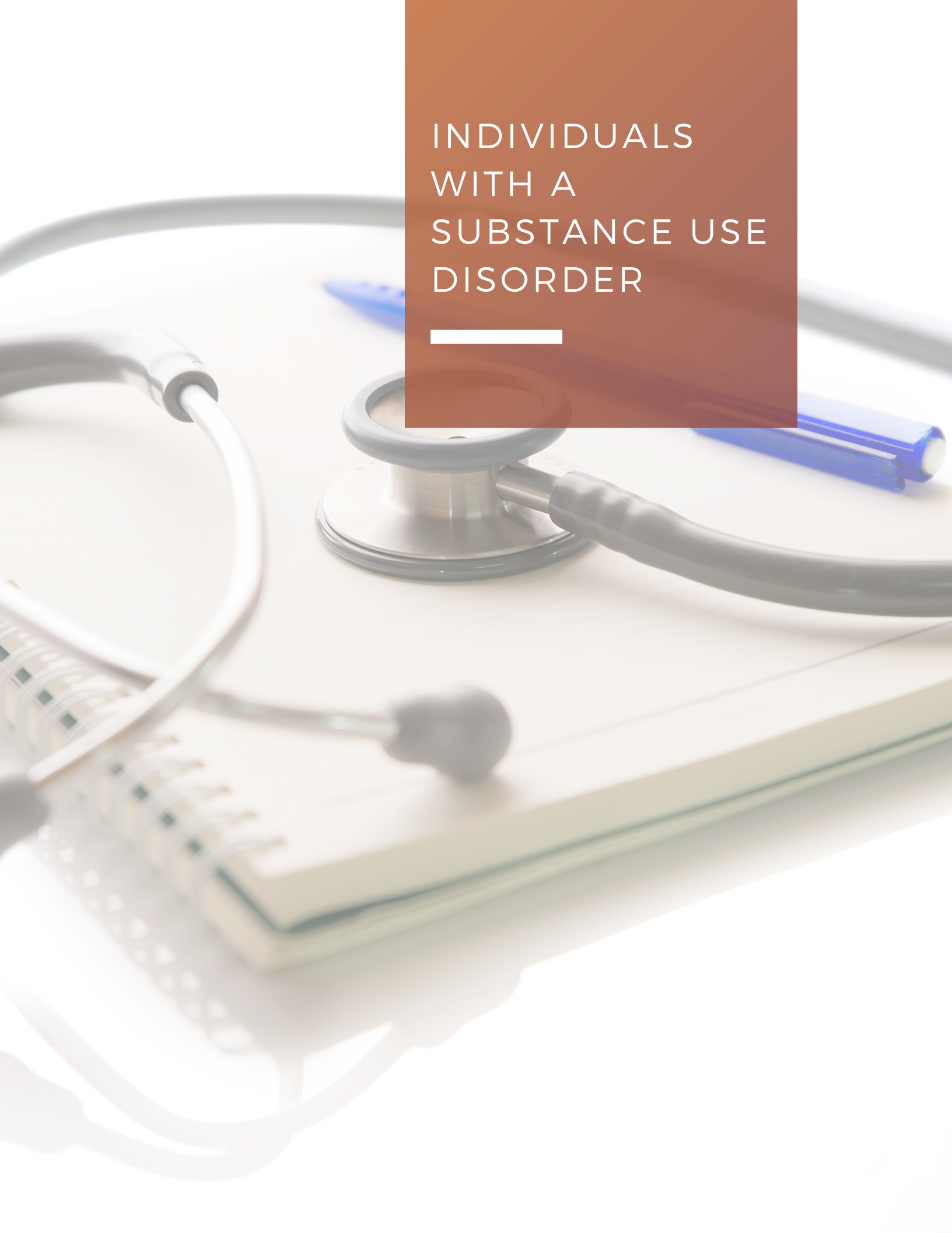
Imagery to Avoid

- Jumpsuits, handcuffs, and images that reflect despair

“The imagery of walking from the darkness into the light as a transition of reentry -- always utilize that. From hopelessness to hope; that's what reentry should be.”

- Individual with Lived Experience



A photograph of a medical setting. A silver stethoscope with a grey tube is resting on a white spiral-bound notebook. A blue pen is also visible on the notebook. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. A semi-transparent brown rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

INDIVIDUALS
WITH A
SUBSTANCE USE
DISORDER



IMAGERY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Portrayal of individuals with a substance use disorder should be positive and hopeful.

Recommendations for imagery of individuals with substance use disorder include:

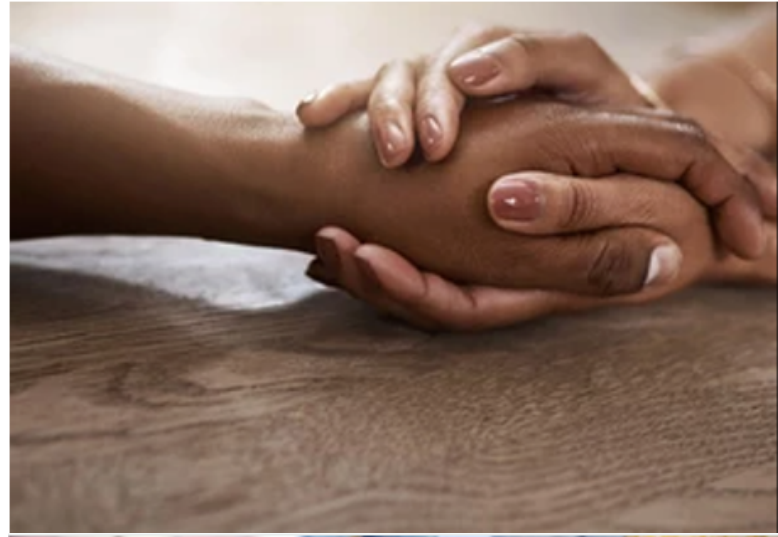
- Using photos of holding hands
- Individuals in a circle to illustrate group therapy or mutual aid support groups

Imagery to Avoid

- Any image with substances in the frame, or any image that indicates hopelessness or sadness

“I love the hand holding because I think it communicates if you're talking about patient services treatment it communicates what we actually do to help people get to where they need to be.”

- Individual with Lived Experience



RECOVERY



IMAGERY OF RECOVERY

Recovery imagery should be positive and hopeful.

Imagery to Use

- Wellness, health and vitality. Images including nature and landscape are positive and reinforce themes of new beginning and health

Imagery to Avoid

- Anything that indicates hopelessness, sadness or resembles private treatment websites



TYPES OF
SUSTANCE USE
DISORDER

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...essing opioid
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Opioids are at

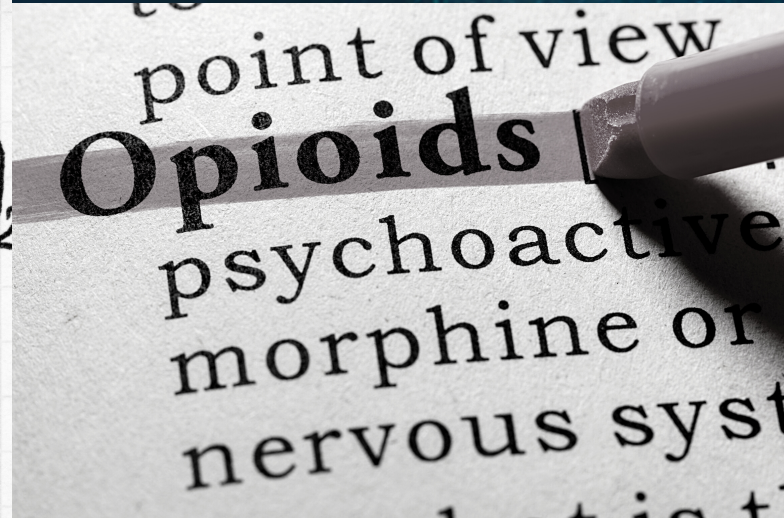
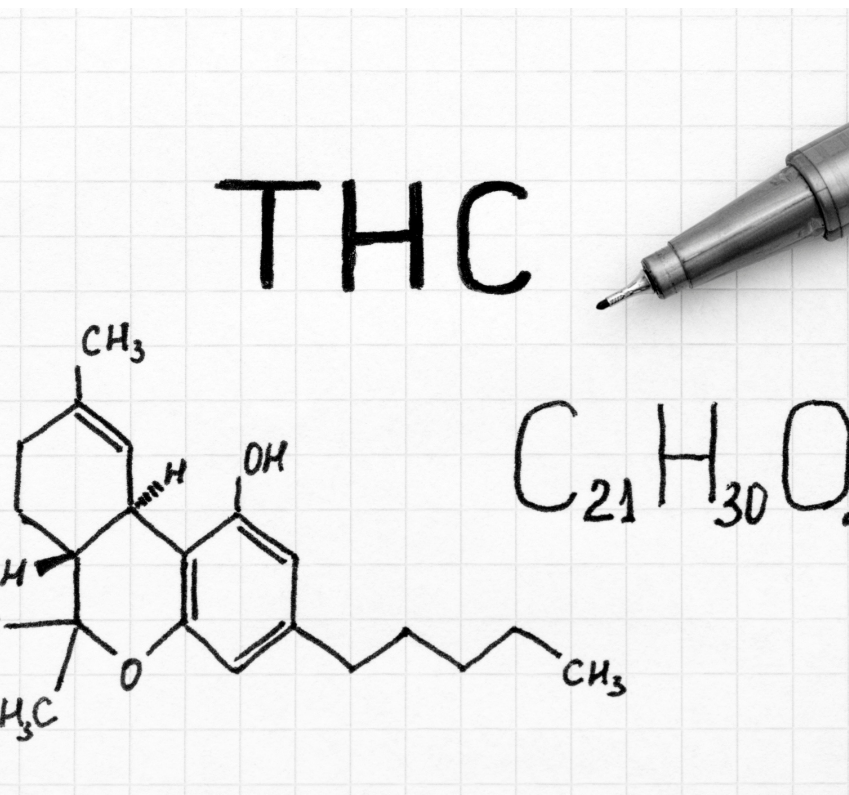
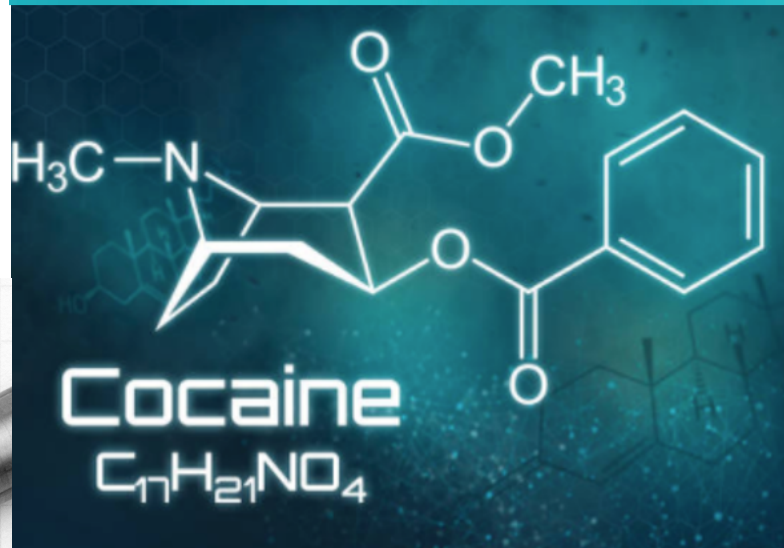
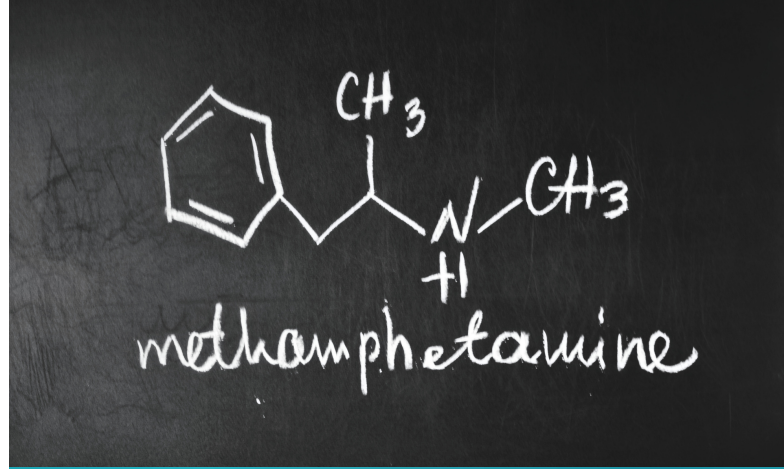
...r euphoric effect

IMAGERY OF TYPES OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

Much of the imagery used to identify different types of substance use disorders (opioid use disorder, stimulant use disorder, alcohol use disorder) can be both triggering and stigmatizing. Recommended images include conceptual options, molecular symbols or definitions from the dictionary that demonstrates the type of substance.

Imagery to Use

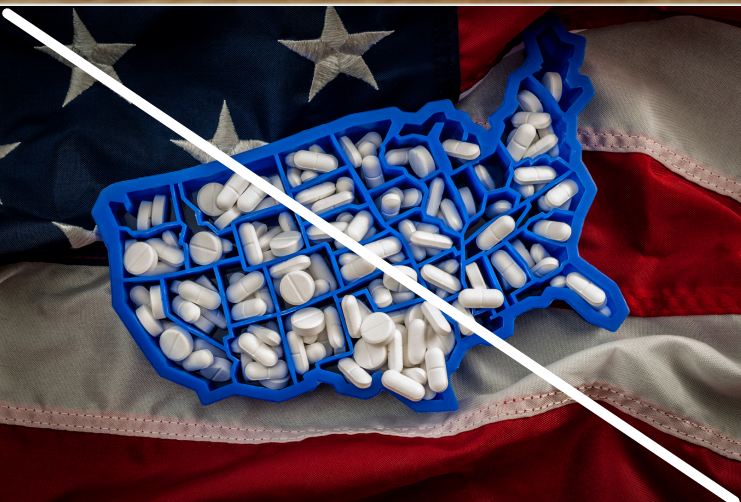
- Molecular symbols
- Dictionary definitions
- Typography without drugs or alcohol in the image



STIGMATIZING IMAGERY

Imager to Avoid

- Substances, whether powders, crystals, marijuana, or pills
- Substances or people using substances, or paraphernalia, including needles, syringes, spoons, or lighters





ADDICTION
POLICY FORUM

NIH
HEAL
INITIATIVE

JUSTICE COMMUNITY OPIOID
INNOVATION NETWORK (JCOIN)