



## ***Speaking Out Against the Stigma of Addiction and Mental Illness***

Alcohol and other drug addictions and mental illnesses are brain disorders  
Alcohol and other drug addictions and mental illnesses can affect anyone  
Alcohol and other drug addictions and mental illnesses are treatable  
Individuals with brain disorders should not be discriminated against

Stigma forces thousands of New Yorkers afflicted with brain disorders, alcohol and other drug addictions, and mental illnesses to suffer in silence, afraid to seek treatment and obtain available services they desperately need and deserve.

Reducing stigma will result in individuals seeking and receiving treatment for their disorders, enabling them to enjoy full and productive lives.

Reducing stigma, treating individuals, and supporting recovery from alcohol and drug problems are associated with dramatic improvements in all areas of life:

- Family health and finance
  - Employment and work production increase significantly
  - Paying bills on time and paying back personal debt double
  - Fifty percent more people pay taxes in recovery than when they are in active addiction
  - Planning for the future, i.e., saving for retirement, increases nearly threefold
  - Involvement in domestic violence (as victim or perpetrator) decreases dramatically
  - Participation in family activities increases by 50%
  - Steady employment increases by over 50%
  - Twice as many people further their education or training
  - Twice as many people start their own businesses
- Higher civil engagement
  - Volunteering in the community increases
  - Voting increases significantly
- Dramatic decreases in public health and safety risks/costs
  - Frequent utilization of costly emergency departments decreases
  - The percentage of uninsured decreases by half
  - Reports of untreated emotional/mental health problems decrease
  - Involvement in illegal acts and involvement with the criminal justice system (arrests, incarceration, DWIs) decrease

Source: Faces and Voices of Recovery, April 2013

Expenditures on various health conditions:

Health Condition	Number of Individuals Diagnosed	Percentage of Individuals Receiving Treatment
Substance Use Disorder	21.6 Million	10.8 %
Any Mental Illness	45.9 Million	39.2 %
Diabetes	28.5 Million	84.0 %
Heart Disease	81.1 Million	76.6 %
Hypertension	4.5 Million	70.4 %

- Annual New York State spending on substance abuse and addiction is more than \$13 billion. *Only 3 percent of this spending is dedicated for prevention and treatment. (Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)*
- The American Medical Association, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Addiction agree that alcohol and drug use causes a chemical change in the brain, often leading to addiction. (Source: The Journal of the American Medical Association)
- Addiction and mental health disorders account for more than one-fifth of all lost days of productive life, far more than cardiovascular disease which ranks second. (Source: Harvard School of Public Health)
- In 2010, approximately 12 percent of NYS residents age 12 and older experienced a substance use disorder (addiction or abuse) annually. Statewide, over 1.9 million New Yorkers (1.77 million adults and 156,000 youth ages 12-17) have a substance abuse problem. (Source: Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, Albany, 2010)
- Alcohol and drug rehabilitation treatment is proven to cut drug use, reduce crime by 80 percent, and reduce arrests by 64 percent. The cost of drug treatment is 15 times less than the cost of locking up a person for a drug-related crime. (Source: Join Together)
- Alcohol and other drug abuse costs Americans upwards of half a trillion dollars a year considering its combined medical, economic, criminal, and social impact on communities. (Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse)

**Treatment works, people recover, and  
New Yorkers are well worth the investment.**



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