

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement by Rita Notarandrea, CEO, on National Addictions Awareness Week

Ottawa, November 12, 2017 — On behalf of the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA), I am pleased to join the many committed individuals and organizations across the country participating in National Addictions Awareness Week (NAAW) 2017.

Today, one in 10 Canadians struggle with addiction and problematic substance use. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, in 2017 deaths related to opioid use alone could well surpass 3,000. At the same time, thousands of individuals across the country are successfully pursuing their own pathways to recovery.

It is clear that the issues surrounding problematic substance use and addiction are as complex as they are consequential. However, as individuals we can all play a simple role in addressing a basic but critical barrier for those individuals with problematic substance use and addiction.

This year, CCSA is putting the spotlight on the stigma surrounding substance use disorders — specifically, how stigmatizing language can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and act as a barrier to seeking help and sustaining recovery. The truth is simple: the words we use when talking about problematic substance use and addiction ... matter.

Words Matter

Harvard University's Dr. John Kelly, founder of the Recovery Research Institute, inspires this year's theme for NAAW. His clinical and research work has focused on the science of recovery, and on reducing stigma among those suffering from addiction.

Dr. Kelly's research shows that the language we use has a very direct effect on how we view people struggling with addiction. For example, referring to individuals as suffering from "substance use disorders" rather than as "substance abusers" is likely to reduce stigma and actually enhance treatment and recovery.

As individuals, we can educate ourselves about the essential nature of addiction as a health condition. We can also ensure that the language we use is consistent with the nature of the condition. Finally, we can support those who put a face and a voice to recovery, to show that it is attainable.

Simply put, we need to reinforce what the science has taught us about addiction. Addiction does not discriminate — it impacts people from all walks of life. It is not a moral failing and it is not a "choice."

With that in mind, and with assistance from several friends and colleagues, CCSA has highlighted these simple, but essential, elements to address stigma through [a series of short video clips, social media content and information sheets](#).

We spoke with Dr. Kenneth Tupper, Director, Implementation and Partnerships, at the [British Columbia Centre on Substance Use](#), and adjunct professor, [University of British Columbia's School of Population and Public Health](#), who shared his views on the stigmatizing terminology of addiction.

We also lend a voice to Recovery Day Ottawa chairman, Gord Garner, and musicians Jaaji and Chelsey June, all of whom shared their unique perspectives on stigma and recovery. Together, they remind us that **people** are at the heart of problematic substance use.



CCSA is committed to ensuring those with substance use disorders receive the timely care they need from our healthcare system, at the same level and quality as those with any other health condition. Using language that accurately portrays what the research has taught us is crucial. I hope this year's NAAW will serve as a reminder moving forward. People suffering with a substance use disorder matter. Addiction matters. Words matter.

Throughout the week, we encourage you to follow the conversation at #WordsMatter and #NAAW2017 on twitter @CCSACanada and @CCDUSCanada to help support the efforts of individuals and organizations throughout Canada as we mark NAAW 2017.

Rita Notarandrea, M.H.Sc., C.H.E.
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction

Media contact

TS Buchanan, Communications Advisor, CCSA

Tel.: 613-235-4048 ext. 237 | Email: tbuchanan@ccsa.ca | Twitter: [@CCSACanada](https://twitter.com/CCSACanada)



Canadian Centre
on Substance Use
and Addiction

CCSA was created by Parliament to provide national leadership to address substance use in Canada. A trusted counsel, we provide national guidance to decision makers by harnessing the power of research, curating knowledge and bringing together diverse perspectives.

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