Join the movement to reduce stigma and increase community inclusion in Arizona. It’s easy! Here are some things you can do:

*Watch your language* – contrary to popular rhyme that “...words can never hurt me,” they really do hurt. Avoid words and slang that perpetuate stigma, for example “nut case”, “psycho,” “wacko,” and other similar expressions.

*Speak up* when you hear someone using stigmatizing language, jokes or misusing psychiatric terms.

*Educate yourself and others* in your community by visiting respected websites and sharing these resources. Attend workshops, conferences and health-wellness fairs. Read materials and books on a variety of topics around mental health, addiction and recovery. Request a stigma reduction presentation or an Arizona Dialogue.

*Listen* to people who have experienced mental health or addiction challenges to learn how their lives have been affected and listen to their stories of recovery. You will be amazed at the incredible amount of resiliency, courage and determination their journeys of recovery contain!

*Attend meetings* in your community, such as ADHS/DBHS Let’s Talk forums and others, to learn the latest news about what is happening in the behavioral health community and how you can help.

*Support community organizations and groups* that provide assistance to persons with behavioral health challenges by donating money, food, clothing and other items; volunteer your time and skills; advocate for funding and services to support those in need of behavioral health services.

*Offer* a place to meet at no charge to support groups. Offer to drive a person to an appointment. Offer a cup of coffee. Offer to babysit. Offer to be an exercise buddy. Offer to care for a pet if someone must stay in the hospital. Offer to tutor a child. Offer your hand in friendship. There is much you can do in your community!

*Reach out* to persons living with behavioral health challenges – they are family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, students, bosses, educators, artists, faith leaders, health care workers, military veterans... all can and do make meaningful contributions to society. Inclusion and compassion go a long way in breaking down stigma.

*Stay in touch,* make room for everyone in your circle and community; be supportive, and hold the hope of recovery by sharing, listening, teaching and encouraging.

*Hire* people in recovery. Work increases quality of life for individuals as well as communities. Contrary to popular myth, most people living in recovery are ready-willing-able to work and have a great deal to offer employers in the way of knowledge, skills and loyalty.

*Be open* about mental health and addiction challenges. It can do more harm than good to keep these very common challenges a secret. Being open helps break the cycle of shame-and-blame that keeps so many from seeking treatment.

*Welcome* everyone to your place of worship. Many people turn to faith in times of trouble as well as times of rejoicing – keep the doors of your place of worship open and welcome all who enter.

*Boycott stigmatizing entertainment* and let the producers and advertisers know why.

*Let your voice be counted* – write or call your legislators with concerns you may have or to lend your support to legislation related to behavioral health. Get out and vote.

**Have questions?**

*Want to attend an Arizona Stigma Reduction Committee meeting?*

*Want to schedule an Arizona Dialogue or stigma reduction presentation?*

Contact: Cynthia Henry, Committee Coordinator
Cynthia.Henry@azdhs.gov / 1-877-464-1015 / (602) 364-1015