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Maternal Opioid Use Disorder Management and CAre REsources in Custody
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Non-Stigmatizing Language: Pregnancy + Addiction

Non-stigmatizing Language: Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking about Addiction		
Instead of…	**Use…**	**Because…**
Addict	Person with substance use disorder	• Person-first language • The change shows that a person "has" a problem, rather than "is" the problem • The terms avoid eliciting negative associations, punitive attitudes, and individual blame
User	Person with OUD or person with opioid addiction (when substance is opioids)	
Substance or drug abuser	Patient	
Junkie	Person in active use; use of the person, and then say "is in active use"	
Former addict	Person in recovery or long-term recovery	
Reformed addict	Person who previously used drugs	
Habit	Substance use disorder or drug addiction	• Inaccurately implies that a person is choosing to use substances or can choose to stop. • "Habit" may undermine the seriousness of the disease
Abuse	• Use (for illicit drugs) • Misuse or used other than prescribed (for prescription medications)	The term "abuse" was found to have a high association with negative judgements and punishment. Legitimate use of prescription medications is limited to their use as prescribed by the person to whom they are prescribed. Consumption outside these parameters is misuse.
Suffering from… Victim of…	Has a history of..., Working to recover from…, Living with…, or Experiences of...	Recovery-oriented language expresses hope, optimism, supports recovery and shifts away from the view that substance use is only negative and has no benefits.
Clean	*For toxicology screen results:* • Testing negative *For non-toxicology purposes:* • Being in remission or recovery • Abstinent from drugs • Not drinking or taking drugs • Not currently or actively using drugs	• Use clinically accurate, non-stigmatizing terminology the same way it would be used for other medical conditions. • Use of such terms may evoke negative and punitive implicit cognition.
Dirty	*For toxicology screen results:* • Testing positive *For non-toxicology purposes:* • Person who uses drugs	• Use clinically accurate, non-stigmatizing terminology the same way it would be used for other medical conditions. • May decrease patients' sense of hope and self-efficacy for change.
Addicted baby Drug babies Born addicted to heroin	• Experience withdrawal symptoms at birth • Baby born to mother who used drugs while pregnant • Baby with signs of withdrawal from prenatal drug exposure • Baby with neonatal opioid withdrawal/neonatal abstinence syndrome • Newborn exposed to substances	• Babies cannot be born with addiction because addiction is a behavioral disorder—this is different than being born showing temporary opioid withdrawal symptoms. • Use clinically accurate, non-stigmatizing terminology the same way it would be used for other medical conditions.

Adapted from:
Words Matter - Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Published November 29, 2021.
https://nida.nih.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/health-professions-education/words-matter-terms-to-use-avoid-when-talking-about-addiction

Schmidt, R., Wolfson, L., Stinson, J., Poole, N., & Greaves, L. (2019). Mothering and Opioids: Addressing Stigma and Acting Collaboratively. Vancouver, BC: Centre of Excellence for Women's Health.