

Mental Health Stigma Guide

Promoting Compassion, Education and Engagement Across Your Organization

What Stigma Looks Like in Practice

Stigma is not always obvious. It often shows up in subtle ways:

- Employees or members minimizing their own needs
- Avoidance of available resources
- Discomfort discussing mental health at work
- Low utilization of behavioral health benefits

It is also reinforced by systems that feel:

- Complex or hard to navigate
- Clinical or impersonal
- Lacking privacy or flexibility

Three Ways to Reduce Stigma

1. Lead with Compassion

Create an environment where mental health feels safe to talk about and act on.

What to do:

- Encourage leaders to model openness and share appropriately
- Use people-first, non-clinical language
- Normalize mental health as part of overall wellbeing

Key insight:

Instead of “seeking treatment,” use “getting support” or “checking in on how you’re feeling.”

2. Strengthen Education

Help people understand what mental health support looks like and when to use it.

What to do:

- Provide clear, simple explanations of available resources
- Share real-life scenarios that make support feel relatable
- Reinforce that early support is both normal and beneficial

Key insight:

People are more likely to engage when they recognize themselves in the experience.

3. Make Access Easy and Human

Reduce friction at the moment someone decides to seek help.

What to do:

- Offer simple, clear entry points to care
- Provide private ways to explore support options
- Ensure resources are culturally and linguistically relevant
- Avoid requiring diagnosis or labels to get started

Key insight:

The easier it feels to begin, the more likely people are to take the first step.

The Role of Digital Experience

Digital tools can play a critical role in reducing stigma when designed thoughtfully.

Effective experiences:

- Allow individuals to start privately
- Use plain, supportive language
- Guide users without overwhelming them
- Offer flexible pathways based on need

At NovaOne, we design access to care around these principles, helping people move from hesitation to action.

Quick Wins You Can Implement Now

- Audit your current communications for clinical or stigmatizing language
- Simplify how people access mental health resources
- Add anonymous or self-guided starting points where possible
- Train managers to respond with empathy and clarity
- Regularly remind people that support is available and normal to use

Key Takeaway



People do not avoid care because they do not need it. They avoid care because it does not feel safe, simple or accessible. Reducing stigma starts with changing that experience. Scan the QR code to learn more at NovaOneHealth.com.

Sources: [APA](#), [CDC](#), [NAMI](#), [WHO](#)