

# Language of Recovery

| Current Terminology                                                                                  | Alternative Terminology                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Treatment is the goal;<br>Treatment is the only way into Recovery                                    | Treatment is an opportunity for initiation into recovery (one of multiple pathways into recovery)      |
| Substance Abuse                                                                                      | Substance Use Disorder/Substance Misuse                                                                |
| Drug of Choice / Abuse                                                                               | Drug of Use                                                                                            |
| Denial                                                                                               | Ambivalence                                                                                            |
| Relapse Prevention                                                                                   | Recovery Management                                                                                    |
| Pathology Based Assessment                                                                           | Strength / Asset Based Assessment                                                                      |
| Focus is on total abstinence from all illicit and non-prescribed substances the CLINICIAN identifies | Focus on the drug CLIENT feels is creating the problems                                                |
| A Drug is a Drug is a Drug                                                                           | Each illicit substance has unique interactions with the brain; medication if available is appropriate. |
| Relapse                                                                                              | Recurrence/Return to Use                                                                               |
| Relapse is part of Recovery                                                                          | Recurrence/Return to Use may occur as part of the disease                                              |
| Clean / Sober                                                                                        | Drug Free / Free from illicit and non-prescribed medications                                           |
| Self Help Group                                                                                      | Mutual Aid Group                                                                                       |
| Untreated Addict/Alcoholic                                                                           | Individual not yet in Recovery                                                                         |
| Drug Overdose                                                                                        | Drug Poisoning                                                                                         |

# The Most Respectful Way of Referring to People is as People

| Current                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Alternative                                                                                                                  | Reasoning                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Clients / Patients / Consumers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | The people in our program<br>The folks we work with<br>The people we serve                                                   | More inclusive, less stigmatizing                                                                                       |
| Alex is an addict                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Alex is addicted to alcohol<br>Alex is a person with a substance use disorder<br>Alex is in recovery from drug addiction     | Put the person first<br>Avoid defining the person by their disease                                                      |
| <p>The terms listed below, along with others, are often people's ineffective attempts to reclaim some shred of power while being treated in a system that often tries to control them. The person is trying to get their needs met, or has a perception different from the staff, or has an opinion of self not shared by others. And these efforts are not effectively bringing them to the result they want.</p> |                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                         |
| Mathew is manipulative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Mathew is trying really hard to get his needs met<br>Mathew may need to work on more effective ways of getting his needs met | Take the blame out of the statement<br>Recognize that the person is trying to get a need met the best way they know how |
| Kyle is non-compliant                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Kyle is choosing not to...<br>Kyle would rather...<br>Kyle is looking for other options                                      | Describe what it looks like uniquely to that individual—that information is more useful than a generalization           |
| Mary is resistant to treatment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Mary chooses not to...<br>Mary prefers not to...<br>Mary is unsure about...                                                  | Avoid defining the person by the behavior.<br>Remove the blame from the statement                                       |
| Jennifer is in denial                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Jennifer is ambivalent about.....<br>Jennifer hasn't internalized the seriousness of....<br>Jennifer doesn't understand..... | Remove the blame and the stigma from the statement                                                                      |



Southeast (HHS Region 4)

**ATTTC**

Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



**Phoenix Center**

Prevent • Treat • Recover

