



# A Path to Recovery: The Story of a Peer Support Specialist

April 22, 2021  
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., ET



Mid-America (HHS Region 7)

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

---

## TASC's Center for Health and Justice

COSSAP TTA Provider for  
First Responder Led Diversion Initiatives



Website:  
[www.centerforhealthandjustice.org](http://www.centerforhealthandjustice.org)



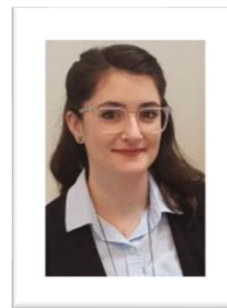
**Center for Health & Justice COSSAP Team**  
TTA provider for COSSAP FRD grantees since 2017



Jac Charlier,  
Executive Director-  
Project Executive  
Lead



Ben Ekelund,  
Director  
Project Lead



Hope Fiori,  
Administrator-  
Project  
Specialist



Jon Ross  
Technical  
Writer



CENTER FOR  
HEALTH & JUSTICE  
AT TASC

 @TASC\_CHJ

# Introductions

**Erika Holliday**

Senior Project  
Manager

The Collaborative  
to Advance  
Health Services  
at UMKC

**Bree Sherry**

Program  
Manager

The Collaborative  
to Advance  
Health Services  
at UMKC

**Jennifer Wolfe**

Certified Peer  
Specialist

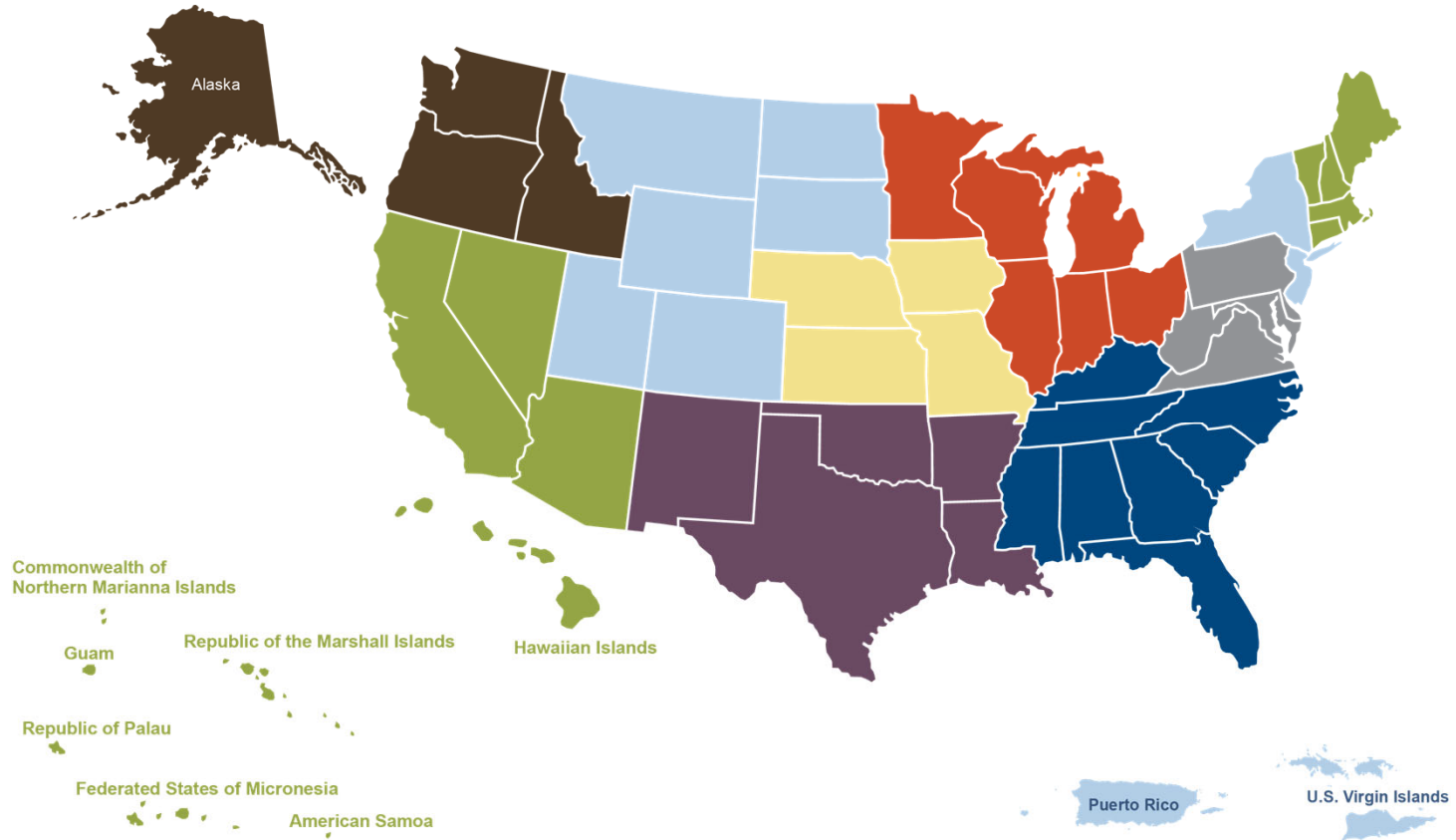
EPICCC/  
CommCARE



# TTC

## Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



# Welcome!

Type in the Chat:

- Name and where you are from
- In what field do you work?



# Objectives

- Participants can associate the effects using substances has on the brain, to the actions made by a person who has substance use disorder.
- Participants will be able to describe 3 different types of stigma and how they contribute to societal norms.
- Participants will be able to identify at least 2 evidence-based practices affected by stigma and will examine the benefits in overdose response procedures.

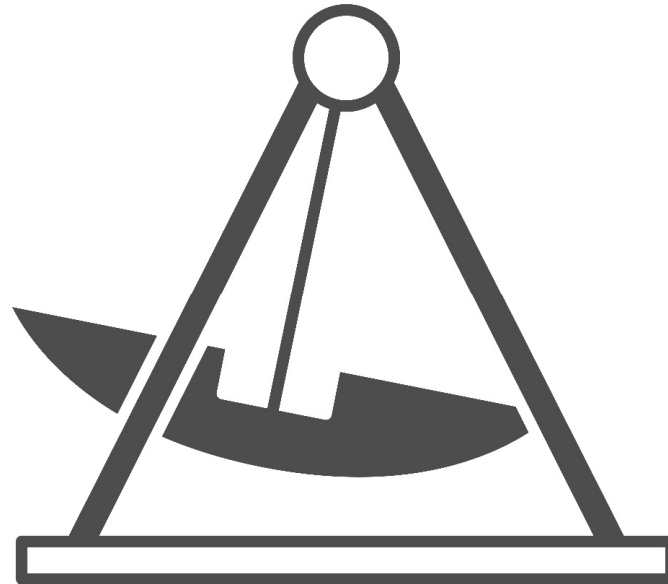


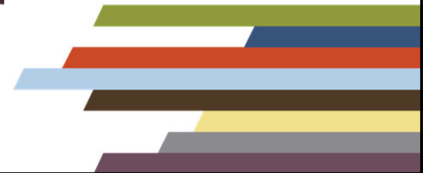
# Let's Start with Jennifer's Story...

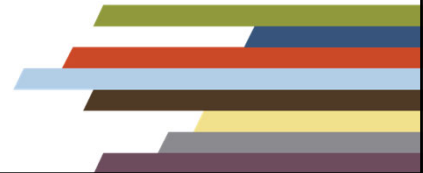


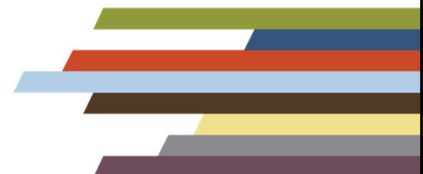


# Addiction and the Brain









This is dopamine.



# Dopamine Levels Compared

## How much dopamine does an activity release?

Various activities cause the brain to release more dopamine than usual. Enjoying food brings a 50 percent boost to dopamine levels in the brain, for instance. Video games and sex also increase dopamine, and drug use does so significantly. It's not reasonable to equate the brain response to drug use with that of video games.

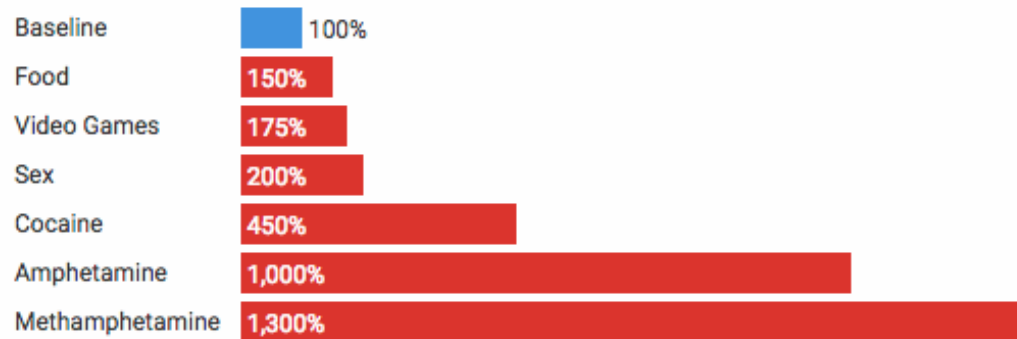
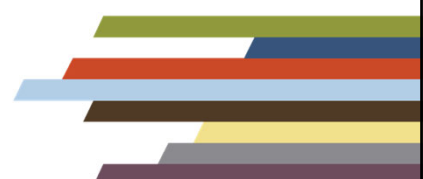
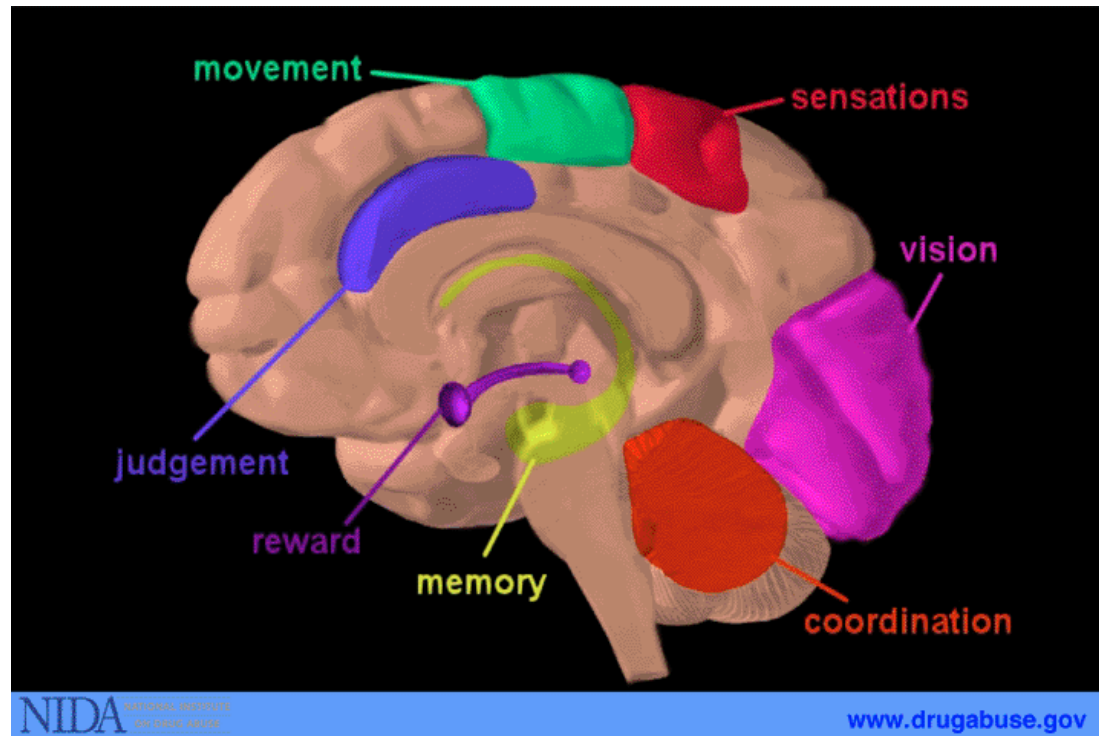


Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND • Source: [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) • [Get the data](#)

<http://econintersect.com/pages/contributors/contributor.php?post=201806211729>



# What do substances do to the brain?

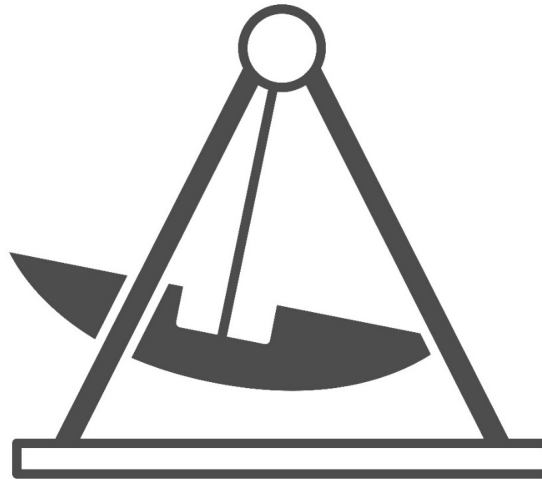


# However...

The extreme amount of dopamine the brain gets from drugs has a backwards swing to it.

After continued use of a substance, the brain becomes reliant on it.

**The large amount of dopamine is now what the brain needs for the body to survive.**





# Withdrawal: Why it's so hard to stop

When drug use stops, the brain is overwhelmed by a sudden overabundance of neurochemicals,

This produces extreme:

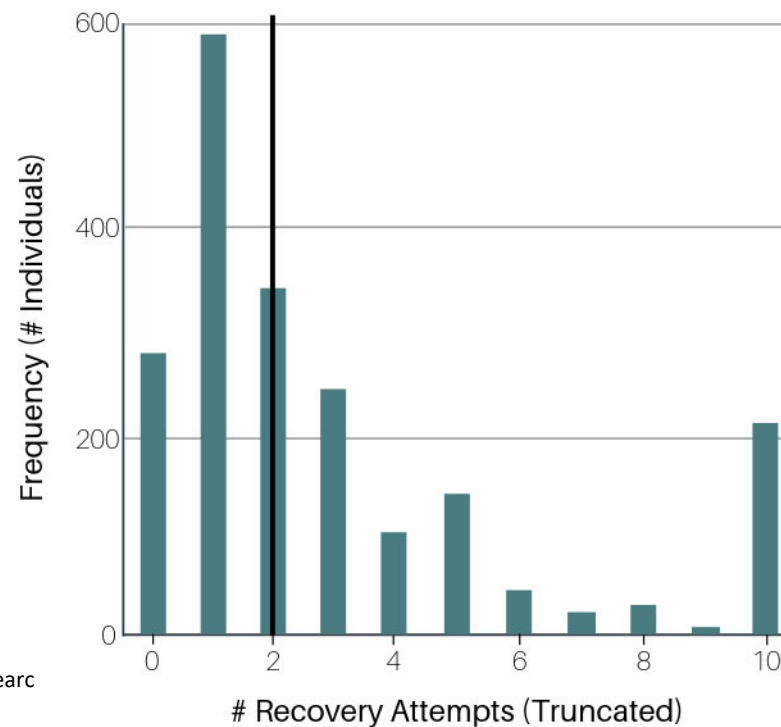
- Anxiety
- Agitation
- Flu like symptoms
- Insomnia

Since many people use substances or activities to “self-medicate” for psychological issues, such as depression, these moods will be particularly noticeable during withdrawal.



# Recovery attempts

On average, it takes someone around 5 serious attempts at sobriety for it to stay. This number increases with the more psychological distress someone has.



<https://www.recoveryanswers.org/research-post/recovery-attempts-review/>



# FAQ

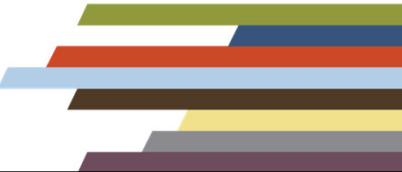
- Why can't someone just stop using? Especially if it's hurting their kids and their families?
- Why would someone steal from loved ones just to get a drug?
- Why do people start using if they know how bad drug addiction is?



# Pause: Back to Jennifer's Story



taboo protection secrecy  
 uncomfortable scorned  
 bullying disgrace  
 discredit  
 pressure  
 guilty  
 bad reputation  
 shameful  
 social guilt  
 prejudiced  
 dishonor  
 stigma  
 discrimination  
 society shame  
 devaluated embarrassment  
 stop disapproval disgrace  
 lonely humiliation  
 ashamed  
 different rejected  
 disgraceful blame  
 reputation fault  
 loneliness  
 shunned  
 depression

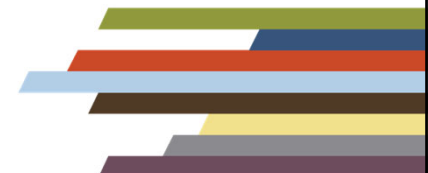


# What is Stigma?



Definition: Stigma is the process by which a negative attitude about mental illness or substance use disorder leads to loss of opportunities.

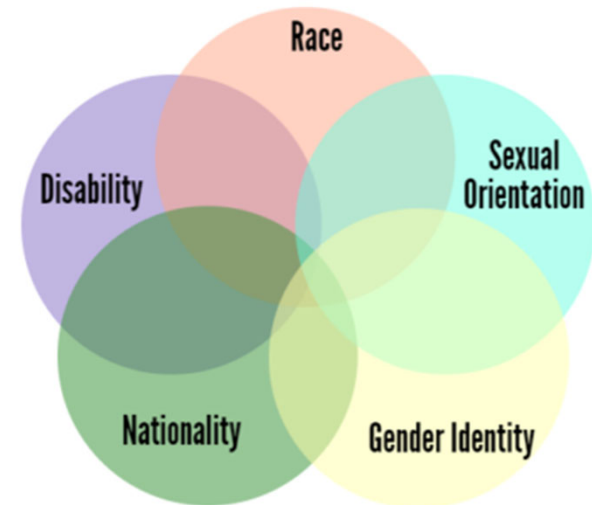
Adapted from SAMHSA (2004)



# Intersectionality

It is important to note that stigma towards people with SUD is increased when the following identities are also held:

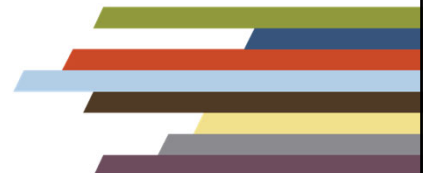
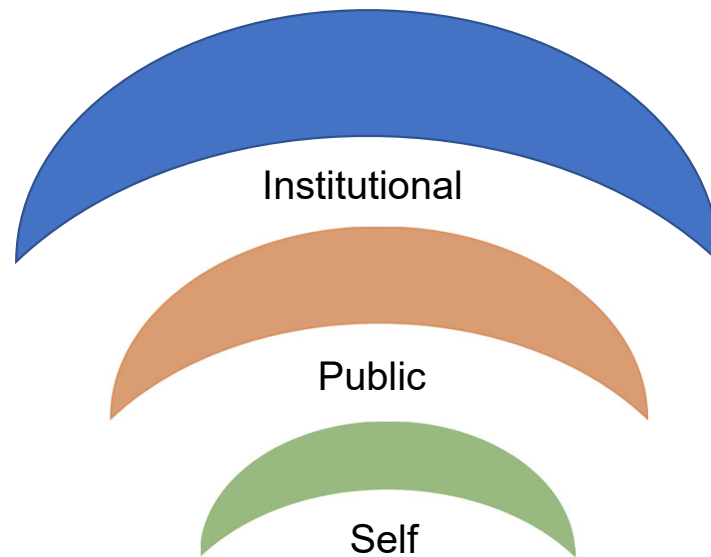
- Women
- People of Color
- People who are pregnant and/or parenting
- LGBTQIA
- People who have income below the poverty line



<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31254965/>



# Types of Stigma





# Public Stigma



Definition: a set of negative attitudes and beliefs that motivate individuals to fear, reject, avoid and discriminate against people with mental illness (or substance use disorder)

*Corrigan PW, Penn DL Am Psychol. 1999 Sep; 54(9):765-76*



# What does Public Stigma look like?

- Persons are violent, unsafe, criminals and should be kept out of the community
- Persons are lazy, don't care, if they did, they would stop using and be with their family and friends
- Persons use the system and any "handouts" just to get money for more drugs



# Self Stigma

Definition: the process in which a person becomes aware of public stigma, agrees with those stereotypes, and internalizes them by applying them to oneself



Corrigan, P. W., Larson, J. E., & Rüsch, N. (2009). Self-stigma and the "why try" effect: impact on life goals and evidence-based practices. *World psychiatry : official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)*, 8(2), 75–81.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2051-5545.2009.tb00218.x>



# What does Self Stigma Look Like?

- I am not worthy of treatment because I am someone who uses drugs
- I lost the privilege to ask for help when I abandoned my family and friends for drugs
- Drugs are the only thing that will be there for me at the end of the day



# Institutional Stigma

Definition: policies and procedures that intentionally or unintentionally limit opportunities for people with mental illness or substance use disorder



Adapted from the American Psychiatric Association, 2020



# What does Institutional Stigma Look Like?

- People who relapse from substance use disorder aren't allowed in recovery housing
- People with a drug conviction aren't allowed to get food stamps



# Barriers to Treatment

**Stigma is one of the biggest barrier to those seeking addiction treatment**

- Inability to afford the cost of care (48%)
- Believing that the problems could be handled without treatment (26.5%)
- Not knowing where to go for services (25%)
- Inadequate or no coverage of mental health treatment (6% to 9%)
- Thinking that treatment would not help (9%)
- Concerns about confidentiality (10%)
- Fear that it might cause neighbors or the community to have a negative opinion(10%)
- Fear that it might cause a negative effect on a person's job (8%)
- Fear of being committed (10%)

# First Responders Play a Critical Role in Reducing Stigma with SUD

- People with SUDs interact disproportionately with members of police force, fire department, and emergency medical services
- Even before first contact, bias and negative attitudes toward people with mental health and SUDs problems can affect the timeliness and quality of care.

<https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/great-lakes-pttc/product/preventing-and-reducing-stigma-first-responders>  
<https://health.mo.gov/data/opioids/factsheets.php>





# Local Resource Video

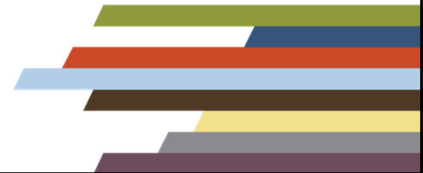


[https://youtu.be/aTZGfe2Q\\_6c](https://youtu.be/aTZGfe2Q_6c)

*first* call



Where is Jennifer Now?



# Leave Behind Narcan Programs

Leave Behind Programs are when first responders offer a free naloxone kit to a patient who was revived from an opioid overdose.

The kit contains two doses of nasal naloxone, use instructions, and referral information for treatment or follow-up care.



# Certified Peer Support Specialists

- Certified Peer Specialists respond to referrals from local hospitals for patients suffering from high-risk opioid use disorder (OUD).
- Best practice programs offer 24/7 referral and linkage to services
- CPS assist community members to find recovery resources and walk with them for up to 12 months to ensure stabilization, helping them with goals including harm reduction strategies, recovery support, stable housing, medication for addiction treatment, employment, and mental and physical health.



# The Data

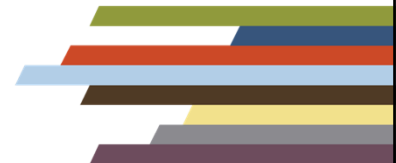
Studies have found overdose patients whose naloxone kits were provided directly to family members on the scene experienced **5.16x** higher odds of being connected to treatment connections (Scharf, 2020)

This same study found that utilizing take home naloxone programs also strengthened the relationship between local first responders and Certified Peer Specialists.

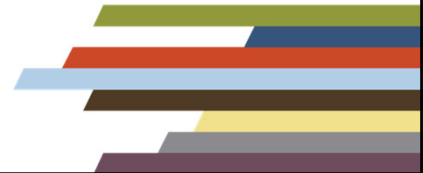


# Where do Stress and Stigma Intertwine?

- When a person is experiencing higher feelings of stress, the critical thinking and decision-making part of their brain is affected.
- Stress can enhance Stigma.
- We are hoping that by utilizing some of the programs explained, some of the stress experienced by first responders will decrease.



# Ending Thoughts



# Questions to Consider

- What role does stigma play in how people experiencing overdose are perceived?
- What strategies would help reduce stigma among health care professionals and law enforcement related to people who use drugs?





# Thank You!

Erika Holliday  
[hollidaye@umkc.edu](mailto:hollidaye@umkc.edu)

Bree Sherry  
[sherry@umkc.edu](mailto:sherry@umkc.edu)

Jennifer Wolfe  
[jwolfe@commcare1.org](mailto:jwolfe@commcare1.org)



---

# Need TA?

To request training and technical assistance, contact CHJ:

Ben Ekelund  
Center for Health and Justice at TASC  
(312) 573-8337  
[bekelund@tasc.org](mailto:bekelund@tasc.org)

or visit the TTA request page on the COSSAP website:  
<https://www.cossapresources.org/Program/TTA/Request>