

DEFINITIONS

Addiction: “Addiction refers to the problematic use of a substance. The harms of substance use can range from mild (e.g. feeling hungover, being late for work) to severe (e.g. homelessness, disease). Treatment options for addiction include self-help [including peer support], counselling, medications, and withdrawal management.”[1]

Ally: “An individual who stands up for a person or group that is targeted, discriminated against or otherwise disadvantaged”.[2]

Companion animal/pet: “Companion animals should be domesticated or domestic-bred animals whose physical, emotional, behavioral and social needs can be readily met as companions in the home, or in close daily relationship with humans.”[3]

Harm reduction: There is no one definition of harm reduction. Recognizing that “[h]arm reduction refers to policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimise negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies and drug laws. Harm reduction is grounded in justice and human rights. It focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support. Harm reduction encompasses a range of health and social services and practices that apply to illicit and licit drugs. These include, but are not limited to, drug consumption rooms, needle and syringe programmes, non-abstinence-based housing and employment initiatives, drug checking, overdose prevention and reversal, psychosocial support, and the provision of information on safer drug use. Approaches such as these are cost-effective, evidence-based and have a positive impact on individual and community health”. [4]

Intersectionality of stigma: “For some people, the stigma of substance use is yet another layer of stigma they experience in their lives” (e.g., class, gender, sexuality, age, race, ability, ethnicity, education, language, culture). [5]

Invisible Illness: This term is used when individuals do not have a visible illness, such as a substance use disorder or PTSD.

PTSD/OSI: Operational stress injury (OSI) is a serious concern in Canada among military Veterans. It refers to psychological struggles resulting from operational duties, with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) the most common form of an OSI among military Veterans in Canada. PTSD is a trauma and stress related disorder. It is a “psychological response to the experience of intense traumatic events, particularly those that threaten life.”[6]

Recovery: Recovery from problematic substance use is “a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential and [wellness goals]”. [7] The term recovery is variously referred to, including: being in recovery, seeking recovery, wellness, health, and healing journey, to name a few.

Service dog: Service dogs include animals trained to assist their Veteran handler with symptoms and limitations from trauma and injuries acquired while serving in the military. Generally, service dogs are visibly identified with a service dog vest and have full access to public spaces (with a few restrictions) because they are trained to perform tasks to assist with their handler’s disabilities.

Stigma: A negative attitude or discrimination against a person, animal, or group based on a distinguishing characteristic, such as substance use, or restricting access to a public space.[8]

Substance use: Substance use occurs along a continuum, from casual non-problematic use, to use that causes harms, through to a medically diagnosed condition, like diabetes, termed a substance use disorder. Many different terms are used when referring to the harms resulting from substance use, including problematic substance use, substance use health concerns, substance use harms, etc. Some terms are preferred over others because they are less stigmatizing (e.g., some identify the term substance abuse as potentially stigmatizing).[9]

Substance use health: “Similar to physical and mental health, substance use health also occurs across a continuum”. [10]

Veteran: According to Veteran Affairs Canada (VAC), a Veteran is “[a]ny former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who successfully underwent basic training and is honourably discharged.”[11]

[1] CAMH The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (n.d.). Addiction. <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/addiction#header>

[2] Conerly, T.R., Holmes, K., & Lal Tamang, A. (2021). Introduction to Sociology (3e). OpenStax.

[3] American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). (n.d.). Definition of companion animal. <https://www.aspc.org/about-us/aspc-policy-and-position-statements/definition-companion-animal>

[4] Harm Reduction International. (n.d.). What is harm reduction? <https://www.hri.global/what-is-harm-reduction>

[5] Gardner, G. (March 10, 2022). Substance Use Health: The Doorways to Stigma-Free Health Outcomes Symposium. CAPSA & CCSA.

[6] Veteran Affairs Canada. (2019, August 22). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and war-related stress. <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/health-support/mental-health-and-wellness/understanding-mental-health/ptsd-warstress>

[7] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2012). SAMHSA’s definition of recovery. <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep12-recdef.pdf>

[8] Ritzer, G. & Guppy, N. (2013). Introduction to Sociology: Canadian version. SAGE Publications.

[9] Csiernik, R. (2011). Substance Use and Abuse, Second Edition. ON: Canadian Scholars.

[10] CAPSA. (2022). Understanding Substance Use Health: A Matter of Equity.

[11] Veteran Affairs Canada. (2019, February 12). Mandate, mission, vision, values and ethics. <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/what-we-do/mandate>

