

# The Grand Challenge to Eliminate Stigma around Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders on a National Scale

## STIGMA

Stigma kills. It is an ongoing threat to well-being, productivity, and performance, impacting all citizens. Stigma is traditionally defined as a discrediting attribute of a person or collective. Stigma is not absolute or permanently attached, but rather, socially constructed, and can be changed, or even eliminated.

The impact of stigma has been well documented. Stigma prevents policymakers from crafting laws free from discrimination and discourages students from pursuing mental health careers. The shame caused by stigma keeps people from seeking the treatment they need, leading to increased rates of suicide and substance use disorders. Stigma has led to an underfunded mental health system, those with the most severe needs often fall through the cracks.

In 2016, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine published the report, *Ending Discrimination Against People with Mental and Substance Use Disorders: The Evidence for Stigma Change*<sup>1</sup>. The report identifies three levels of stigma:

1. Structural – laws, regulations, policies
2. Public – attitudes, beliefs, behaviors
3. Self-stigma – internalized negative stereotypes

## LEADERSHIP

Over 100 organizations have joined the Grand Challenge so far and are working together to grow a national movement that will eventually include thousands of organizations and millions of people. Today the group includes many of the largest nationally recognized organizations as well as medium and small-sized organizations that have efforts dedicated to eliminating stigma. Our National Leadership Steering Team is made up of CEOs and executives from these organizations:



<sup>1</sup>National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2016. *Ending Discrimination Against People with Mental and Substance Use Disorders: The Evidence for Stigma Change*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/23442>.

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## **THE WAY FORWARD: COLLECTIVE IMPACT**

Collective impact is a network of community members, organizations, and institutions that advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population and systems-level change. We have adopted this approach and the five essential elements of a successful Collective Impact initiative to solve a social problem in our work. These include:

1. A common agenda, shaped by collectively defining the problem and creating a shared vision to solve it.
2. Shared measurement, based on an agreement among all partners to track and share progress in the same way, allowing for continuous learning, improvement, and accountability.
3. Mutually reinforcing activities, integrating the partners' many different activities to maximize results.
4. Continuous communication to provide transparency and build trust.
5. A backbone team dedicated to aligning and coordinating the group's work.

## **THE AD COUNCIL**

With a founding gift of \$15 million, The Huntsman Mental Health Institute jumpstarted the Ad Council's multi-year, \$65 million national campaign, which aims to change social norms, reduce stigma, and encourage people to take a proactive approach to their mental health concerns. This effort will unite leading brands, marketers, media companies, and non-profits to encourage people to take steps to support their mental health. As a result of this collaboration, the Ad Council has officially joined the Grand Challenge and will be providing tool kits to the partner network

## **HUNTSMAN MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE – THE BACKBONE ORGANIZATION**

Huntsman Mental Health Institute (HMHI) was established in 2021 following the Huntsman Foundation's historic gift to the University of Utah of \$150 million. HMHI is a university-wide institute with a reputation throughout the Mountain West as a leader in advanced psychiatric treatment and care, serving a diverse population from young children to geriatric patients. Researchers at HMHI develop and apply the most advanced methods in genetics, imaging, epidemiology, and big data analysis. HMHI is also the regional training center for psychiatry and other mental health disciplines. HMHI's main 170-bed full-service hospital is adjacent to the University of Utah campus, and HMHI's 1,691 faculty, staff, and students provide clinical, research, and training programs in over 20 locations across Utah and Idaho. For more information, visit [HMHI.utah.edu](https://www.hmhi.utah.edu).