

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OHMHAS)
May 19, 2025

Updated guidance from HHS on terminology for consistent use in reports, white papers, and webinars

- Substance Use Disorder – when referring to DSM-V conditions
- Addiction can also be used for a lay friendly general term to describe substance use disorder
- **Substance misuse** – when an overarching term related to the use of tobacco, use of illicit drugs, misuse of prescription drugs, and use of alcohol (underage) or misuse of alcohol (adults) is needed
- Alternatives for overarching term for illicit drugs or more generally you could say “drug use” or “illicit drug use” (this would not explicitly include alcohol)
- You could also use “alcohol and drug use” or “alcohol, tobacco and drug use” or “drug and alcohol use”
- **Misuse should be used** in the following circumstances
 - When referencing the specific use of substances or classes of substances that require a distinction between misuse and use
 - Ex: prescription drug misuse or prescription opioid or stimulant misuse
 - Ex: alcohol misuse among adults
- **Misuse should not be used** in the following circumstances
 - When referencing underage use of alcohol. Terms such as “alcohol use” or “underage drinking” should be used
 - When referencing illicit drugs. In these cases “use” should be used
 - Ex: illicit drug use, heroin use, methamphetamine use, crack use
- **Injection drug use** replaces the term people who inject drugs
- **Populations with higher prevalence** (or rates) of XYZ replaces disproportionately affected (or impacted) populations
- Can also use at-risk or high-risk populations (or communities)
- **Mental Disorder** – to be used when referring to DSM-V conditions
- Mental illness or mental health challenges/problems/issues/conditions can be used if needed for more lay friendly general terms to describe mental health or people with mental disorders
- **Serious mental illness (SMI) and serious emotional disturbance (SED)** can be used when referencing specific populations, programs or initiatives or conditions that are historically associated with these terms