



Choices are for all

Life is full of choices. But not for all of us. Housing, work, recreation, transportation — these are all choices that many of us make for ourselves. But for adults and children living with disabilities, long-term illnesses, or aging issues, these lifestyle choices often are made by others. For some, these choices are limited by stigma.

What is stigma?

Stigma uses negative labels to define a person. When we use negative labels, we discriminate. We may discriminate against people without realizing it. Unfortunately, each time someone is turned away from employment, school, housing, community involvement, or appropriate health care services, based on stigma, everyone loses. We all benefit when older people, adults, and children with disabilities or long-term illnesses are welcomed into community life. You can make a difference!



**Embracing *everyone!*
in our communities**



How does stigma hurt our communities?

In the Workplace

Older people and people living with disabilities are less likely to be employed, even though they want to work. Studies also show that older people and people with disabilities are dependable and flexible in the workplace. Stigma robs everyone of a work experience enriched by unique capabilities.



In Housing

Many older people and people living with disabilities or long-term illnesses want to live independently. With community support, they can. However, stigma may limit access to housing in our communities due to the lack of physical access or discrimination.

In Health Services

Older people and people living with disabilities or long-term illnesses often are treated or denied health care based on their disability. Other health problems sometimes are not treated because of stigma. People with disabilities do not see themselves as sick people who need to be treated. They view themselves as people of differing abilities who, like everyone else, may need community support and, sometimes, health services. Access to appropriate and timely health services is necessary for everyone.



In the Community

Stigma prevents people from living full and productive lives as friends, neighbors, and taxpayers. Stigma isolates people. When we welcome everyone in our communities, we all gain from our unique abilities. In our neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools, everyone benefits from inclusion. Supportive services in our communities help everyone.