**Information Sheet**

**Campaign Overview:**

* The Stigma Project is a bold, provocative statewide campaign launched by the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council (PADDC) to change people’s thinking, behavior and attitudes toward people with disabilities.
* The objective is to get people’s attention regarding this important topic, have people recognize and be aware of their own stigmatizing thoughts, and educate the public about how they should be thinking and behaving to ultimately promote a more diverse and inclusive Commonwealth.
* Our goal is to rally Pennsylvanians to eliminate the stigma associated with people with disabilities.
* The Stigma Project is funded through a federal grant awarded to PADDC and administered by the Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers’ Association (PMHCA).
* This campaign is unique in that it brings together disability-related organizations all across Pennsylvania representing all disabilities in a collaborative effort to make a real impact on eliminating the stigma associated with people with disabilities.

**Problem:**

* Stigma against people with disabilities is ugly, hurtful and widespread, and it negatively affects the lives of thousands of Pennsylvanians.
* According to a 2012 survey conducted for PMHCA, 79% of people said they believe society thinks of individuals with physical, mental or intellectual disabilities "with discomfort and awkwardness." However, most people would say they do not contribute to the stigma surrounding people with disabilities. The truth is that lack of exposure, interaction and dialogue with people with disabilities causes natural reactions of discomfort, caution and fear, which fuel discrimination. Most people want to do the right thing and react in the right manner; however, their uncertainty leads them to avoid interacting with people with disabilities and thus creates an even larger gap in understanding.
* After just celebrating the 25th Anniversary of ADA, we have to realize that even with all the changes we’ve made in laws and policies, we’re sadly behind in changing attitudes and removing stigma. In our movies, our literature, our TV and our news, we still are shown a world where disability is at best something to be pitied and cured, and at worst, a life not worth living. Being stigmatized can devastate the most important things in life. It can keep people from getting the job they need or the housing they desire.

**Our Strategy:**

* In order to make a real impact on the stigma, we first need Pennsylvanians to recognize that their own beliefs and attitudes, although often in their subconscious, are fostering the stigma. Then, we need to change their thinking.
* It will take more to change this complex issue than telling people to stop stigmatizing or to simply generate awareness about the subject. Our campaign is designed to:
* Get people’s attention in a bold way that cuts through the clutter and noise of everyday activities
* Make people look at themselves and their thoughts. Create emotion and get people talking
* Educate and explain why people’s thinking is stigmatizing. Teach others how they should think and behave
* Engage people and get them interacting with people with disabilities. Greater comfort and increased interaction is what changes stigma

**Thought Bubble Rationale:**

* Stop people in their tracks and get their attention. Start a conversation about the stigma associated with people with disabilities.
* These stigmatizing statements came out of focus groups of people without disabilities, people with disabilities and from existing research. The statements were vetted by people with disabilities, and in some cases, developed by people with disabilities.
* The thought bubbles draw attention and put a spotlight on the statements that are said to people with disabilities on a daily basis. Many of the people with disabilities we spoke to unfortunately said they have heard much worse than the statements on the thought bubbles and point out that, if they have to hear them on a daily basis, so too should people without disabilities. We hope people are offended by these statements because they ARE offensive and hurtful, and it needs to stop!
* Stigma is an issue we don’t like to talk about, but we must in order to initiate real change.
* The stigma associated with people with disabilities has been covered up and ignored for too long. This campaign exposes it for what it is.

**Thought Bubble Statements:**

* I could never do what disabled people do. They’re such an inspiration.
* Handicapped people should suck it up. We all have problems.
* Hiring disabled people is a huge risk.
* I don’t let my kids talk to handicaps. You never know what could happen.
* Handicapped people make me nervous.
* Mentally ill people are dangerous.
* Handicapped people should just stay home. Quit trying to be like us.
* They call it “ADHD,” I call it bad parenting.
* Most “disabled” people are just scamming the system.
* I’m glad my kid doesn’t ride the short bus.
* There’s no such thing as a learning disability—people just need to work harder.

**Campaign Themes:**

* The stigma against people with disabilities is ugly, hurtful and many times, unnoticed. It’s time to stare stigma in the face and start talking about it.
* We all want love, respect, happiness and acceptance. We can achieve this regardless of how we look, move, think, hear and communicate. We are more similar than we are different.
* Differences are not deficits.
* What are you thinking? Let’s think again!

**Campaign Components:**

* Website [www.letsthinkagain.org](http://www.letsthinkagain.org)
  + Videos (people with disabilities reacting to thought bubbles and educating people about how they should be thinking)
  + Pledge form—pledge and offer action to help end stigma
  + Pledge videos—high-profile people and community leaders taking the pledge to help end stigma
  + Stigma quiz—test your level of stigma. This is an opportunity to educate people about stigma and their thinking
* Social media ([facebook.com/LetsThinkAgainPA](https://www.facebook.com/LetsThinkAgainPA)) and ([twitter.com/LetsThinkAgain\_](https://twitter.com/LetsThinkAgain_))
* Handouts
* Bracelets
* News release and press coverage
* Public Service Announcements

**Organizations Supporting Campaign:**

* Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council (PADDC)
* Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers Association (PMHCA)
* Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
* The Arc of Pennsylvania
* Consumer Health Coalition
* Center for Independent Living of Central Pennsylvania
* Many more local and regional disability organizations across Pennsylvania