

Some Tribal leaders, elders, and others who have not yet received the benefit of education about medication assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder (OUD) incorrectly believe that medications used to treat OUD are replacing one drug with another. This handout can be used to educate these individuals and others about the vast differences between the use of street opioids and medications prescribed as part of an individual's MAT for OUD.

Opioid Misuse/Illicit Use vs. Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT): Important Distinctions		
Variables	Opioid Misuse/Heroin/Fentanyl	Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)
Motivation for use	Maintain addiction (avoid adverse consequences, e.g., withdrawal)	Recovery support
Context of use	Illicit drug-using peer network and culture/Presence of children	Medical supervision/oversight
Reliable purity	Unknown/None	FDA-approved
Optimal dosage	Variable/Intoxication/Withdrawal avoidance	Helps the individual "feel normal" (metabolic stabilization) without impairment from intoxication or withdrawal
Method of administration	Injected, snorted, smoked	Oral/Implants/Monthly shot
Availability of psychosocial recovery supports	None	Directly/Indirectly provided
Functionality	Clouded mental functioning	Functional stabilization/safe parenting capacity Suppression of opioid craving
Overdose risk	High	Non-existent