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**Nov. 16, 2017**

Official News Release  
For Immediate Release

**CHATHAM TWP. IS 26<sup>TH</sup> MORRIS COUNTY “STIGMA FREE” TOWN**  
*TWO-THIRDS OF MORRIS TOWNS HAVE JOINED COUNTYWIDE STIGMA-FREE INITIATIVE  
RELATED TO MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS*

The Chatham Township Committee has passed a resolution to declare the township Stigma-Free, making the total 26 of the county’s 39 towns to join the Morris County “Stigma Free” initiative that aims to help eradicate the stigma associated with mental illness and substance abuse disorders.



This grass roots initiative recognizes the high prevalence of mental illness and substance use disorders in our communities, and promotes re-education and understanding that can help lead to treatment and recovery – minus the stigma associated with these illnesses.

We are pleased to have passed this resolution as it represents yet another step in our efforts to increase awareness of mental illness," said **Chatham Township Mayor Curt**

**Ritter.** "I hope our ongoing efforts to shed light on this important topic will encourage our residents to talk, listen, and learn about mental illness.

"Our community forums and Out of the Darkness walks on suicide awareness and prevention have helped elevate the conversation and we will continue our efforts to remove the stigma of mental illness in the future," **Mayor Ritter added.**

As stated in the Chatham Township resolution, "Stigma-Free communities aim to inspire public interest and open dialogues about stigma, raise awareness of the disease of mental illness and create a culture wherein residents feel supported by their communities and neighbors and feel free to seek treatment for their disease with fear of stigma."

## MORRIS COUNTY PROUD TO BE STIGMA-FREE

**Other Stigma-Free towns** in Morris County are Boonton, Boonton Township, Butler, Chatham Borough, Denville, Dover, East Hanover, Hanover, Jefferson, Long Hill, Madison, Mendham Borough, Mine Hill, Montville, Morris Plains, Morristown, Morris Township, Mountain Lakes, Parsippany, Pequannock, Randolph, Rockaway Borough, Rockaway Township, Roxbury, and Washington Township, plus the

Montville Township School District.



Freeholder Doug Cabana

"This initiative is an important step in helping affected people seek recovery, without fear of stigma or reprisal," said **Morris County Freeholder Director Doug Cabana.** "But it is only support shown for this Stigma-Free initiative by towns like Chatham Township, and their officials and residents, that can make this grass roots effort succeed."

Morris County has created a Stigma Free website [www.morriscountystigmfree.org](http://www.morriscountystigmfree.org) to call attention to the initiative, provide information and resources, and a calendar of upcoming events related to mental illness and substance abuse. A Stigma Free Toolkit also is available for towns and communities.

For information on the disease of mental illness, visit [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) and for information on NAMI's national Stigma Free effort, visit: <https://www.nami.org/stigmfree>

***Stigma is defined** as a mark of disgrace which results from the judgment by others. When individuals are labeled by their illnesses, they experience judgment and prejudice. Stigma brings experiences and feelings of shame, embarrassment, distress, hopelessness and reluctance to seek or accept help.*

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