Sexual Health Stigma

Impact

- **Reduced Access to Healthcare:** Stigma can deter individuals from seeking necessary sexual health services, including STI testing, treatment, and contraception.
- **Fear of Disclosure:** Individuals may fear judgment or discrimination if they disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity, or experiences with STIs or other sexual health issues.
- **Mental Health Problems:** Stigma can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, anxiety, and depression, impacting mental health and well-being.
- **Social Isolation:** Individuals may withdraw from social interactions and relationships due to fear of judgment or discrimination.
- **Poor Health Outcomes:** Delayed or inadequate care due to stigma can lead to poorer health outcomes, including increased risk of STI transmission and complications.

Root Causes

- **Societal Norms:** Strong societal emphasis on heteronormativity and traditional gender roles can lead to negative views of non-heterosexual orientations, behaviors, and identities.
- **Religious and Cultural Beliefs:** Some religious and cultural beliefs may view sex as inherently sinful or unclean, contributing to shame and stigma.
- **Lack of Education and Open Dialogue:** Avoidance of open and honest conversations about sexuality and sexual health, both within families and schools, can perpetuate misinformation and negative stereotypes.

Sexual health stigma can take many forms, including:

- **Stigma surrounding STIs:** People with STIs may be perceived as "bad" or "dirty".
- **Stigma against LGBTQ+ individuals:** People who identify as LGBTQ+ may face discrimination and prejudice in accessing healthcare and other services.
- **Stigma surrounding sexual dysfunction:** Individuals who experience sexual dysfunction may feel ashamed or embarrassed to seek help.
- **Stigma surrounding abortion:** People who have abortions may face judgment and discrimination