

Mental Health and Substance Use at Work

Recovery Friendly



Employer Toolkit

Understanding Substance Use Disorders

Understanding substance use disorders (SUDs) (often referred to as addiction) and how they affect individuals is critical to understanding how opioid misuse impacts the workplace. Employers who understand the nature of SUDs can create effective solutions for employees.

DEFINITION

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) defines SUD as a long term, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug-seeking and use despite harmful consequences. SUDs can impair physical health, mental health and other functioning. This disease is not caused by moral shortcomings or weakness of character, and it is not a choice that someone makes. Substance use disorders don't discriminate – people of all ages, genders, races, of any socioeconomic status, and living in any geographic region can be affected. Data demonstrate this clearly:

NATIONWIDE IN THE WORKFORCE

- Nearly 1 in 10 U.S. workers will struggle with abuse/dependence of illicit drugs, prescriptions medications and alcohol each year.
- U.S Department of Labor report that drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace causes 65% of on the job accidents.
- Over 26% of employed adults have substance abuse or addiction in their family. Over 42 % of these employees felt their productivity suffer as a result.
- 95% of fatal opioid overdoses occur in working aged adults.
- Drug poisonings, a category that includes opioid related overdoses, account for 56% of off the job fatalities.
- Overexertion and bodily reaction are the most frequent occupational injury involving days away from work, and slips, trips and falls come in third. These types of injuries can result in an opioid prescription, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive workplace injury prevention programming in preventing opioid misuse and opioid use disorder.

SUDs are treatable, and recovery is the expected outcome of treatment. SUDs require ongoing management that may include medication, therapy and lifestyle change. Once in treatment for an SUD, a person can go on to live a healthy and successful life as they pursue recovery. It takes time to train the brain back to its healthy state. More than 10% of Americans live in recovery.

The Mental Health and Substance Use at Work Employer Toolkit has been developed to raise awareness with businesses about how to respond to the risks associated with mental health challenges and substance use disorder. The content is meant for educational purposes only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice or replacing the additional work needed to develop a responsible Recovery Friendly Workplace program. As such, it should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a legal professional, or other competent advisor.

Medical advice and information in this document were approved by The National Safety Council-NSC physicians who advise the Council on our substance use harm initiatives. These doctors are also members of the NSC Physician Speakers Bureau.

NEED HELP?

If you have questions or need help finding materials or local treatment providers, please contact admin@huroncountymhas.org.