

Understanding and addressing substance abuse in the workplace

Contributed by: Michelle Chiaro, MSW, Senior Care Manager, Health Advocate EAP+Work/Life



Substance use and abuse are common in our society. In fact, more than 25 percent of employees are affected, either as a user or by the substance abuse of a family member. While this problem is not new, drug and alcohol abuse continues to have devastating effects on both the organization and the individual employees involved.

What you should know:

Addiction is a medical condition, not a moral failure.

Substance use can create or exacerbate many issues in the workplace, including on-the-job accidents, reduced productivity, and absenteeism, all of which threaten an organization's bottom line.

Common signs of abuse can include:

- Slurred speech or lack of motor coordination
- Irritable mood or emotional unsteadiness
- Inconsistency or change in work patterns
- Withdrawing from peers

There are multiple types of substances.

Each can have different effects, so it is important to know how they may impact an individual's behavior. Frequently used substances include:

- Alcohol
- Stimulants
- Depressants
- Opioids
- Cannabinoids
- Hallucinogens

What you can do:

Be proactive and preventative. Provide training to both employees and managers/supervisors about the hazards of substance abuse, what to look for and how to handle suspected substance misuse or abuse.

Have a plan and policy. Create or update the organization's substance abuse policy, addressing testing protocol, intervention procedures, disciplinary actions and more. Having a policy in place supports managers and supervisors and ensures employees are treated fairly, professionally and in a consistent matter, helping to reduce the stigma associated with substance use.

Offer support. Display compassion and empathy while supporting employees and providing opportunities to receive help. Ensure that the organization's health plan offerings cover different types of treatment for substance abuse disorders, including in-patient and outpatient options.

Direct to resources. Utilize Health Advocate's EAP+Work/Life program. For employees, it is a free and confidential resource to connect with expert help and support, including navigating treatment options. The EAP can also support employers in creating strategies and policies to address substance use in the workplace.

Additional resources: www.samhsa.gov, www.drugabuse.gov

**This guide offers practical information for employers regarding substance use and the workplace. It is meant to inform but is not intended to diagnose an employee or provide treatment recommendations.*



Proactively addressing substance abuse in the workplace can help support employees affected while reducing the potential impact on both individuals and the workplace.



Contact Health Advocate's EAP+Work/Life program for more information or assistance.

888.293.6948

Email: answers@HealthAdvocate.com

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