

# CREATING A RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

## A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

### WHY CREATE A RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE?



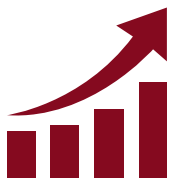
1 in 6 people\* in the U.S. have a Substance Use Disorder<sup>1</sup>



1 in 10 have an Alcohol Use Disorder<sup>1</sup>



1 in 12 have a drug use disorder<sup>1</sup>



Overdose deaths are increasing, with >100k deaths in 2021.<sup>2</sup>



The odds are greater of dying from an opioid overdose than a motor vehicle crash.<sup>3</sup>

*However, less than 5% are actively seeking treatment.<sup>4</sup>*

Recovery friendly workplaces reap the benefits of increased worker well-being, decreased turnover, increased productivity, and/or lower healthcare costs.

Employers' motivation to implement recovery friendly workplaces may be driven by the following; (1) to avoid losing a valuable employee due to a zero drug policy, (2) having an experience with someone who has struggled with addiction or overdose, and/or (3) an intrinsic desire to positively impact the lives of others.

### THE IMPACT OF A RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

*"[My employer] allowed me the opportunity to be seen as more than an addict. Be seen as more than somebody with a lot of baggage"*

Employee

*"When you treat people with compassion, respect, honesty... you're going to have more success."*

Recovery Treatment Provider

*"I know it's working... We've had more successful cases of somebody coming to us first and saying 'Hey, I need some time off. I need to get well.'"*

Employer

**60-75% of individuals with substance use disorder will recover**  
*(achieve full sustained remission)*



HEALTHIER WORKFORCE  
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--> [www.healthierworkforcecenter.org](http://www.healthierworkforcecenter.org)

# HOW TO FOSTER A RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

## Strive for Culture of Care

- Implement policies and programs that make clear your dedication to worker well-being, position on substance use, and support of employees in recovery
- Coach leaders to model caring values and using non-stigmatizing language
- Provide flexible schedules and paid leave for mental and physical health
- Address bullying/incivility in the workplace

## Train Leaders

- Recognize signs of impairment
- To use effective communication strategies with employees in need
- Know how to refer employees to resources, HR, and EAP
- Model healthy work-life balance
- Accommodation for return to work and safety sensitive tasks after treatment
- Educate on laws and organizational policies related to substance use and employment, leave, disability, and accommodation

**Absenteeism/decline in work performance**

**Changes in appearance, mood, or attitude**

**Withdrawing from work and friends**

**Unexplained disappearances from work**

**Sleeping on the job/unable to concentrate**

**Defensive when approached about problems**

## Offer Services & Programs

**Regularly promote available resources:**

- Return to work contract for a second chance program
- Healthcare insurance benefits for recovery treatment, medication for opioid use disorder, and counseling
- Flexible work time and Paid Time Off to allow workers to seek treatment
- Peer support specialists to build trust for employees who need help for opioid or substance misuse

## Educate Employees

- Substance Use Disorder is a brain disease
- Workplace challenges associated with substance use, addiction, and recovery
- How to use non-stigmatizing language for communication
- Organizational policies and recovery friendly workplace efforts (resources, services, and accommodations)
- Confidentiality and privacy rights
- Have Narcan ("the Lazarus drug") onsite and train workers to prevent overdose

\*Ages 12 and up

1 SAMHSA (2023). SAMHSA Announces National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Results Detailing Mental Illness and Substance Use Levels in 2021.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/20230104/samhsa-announces-nsduh-results-detailing-mental-illness-substance-use-levels-2021>.

2 CDC (2021). Drug Overdose Deaths in the US Top 100,000 Annually.

[https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs\\_press\\_releases/2021/20211117.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2021/20211117.htm).

3 NSC (2023). Your Odds of Dying from an Accidental Opioid Overdose Continue to be Greater than Dying in a Motor Vehicle Crash. <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/all-injuries/preventable-death-overview/odds-of-dying/>.

4 Frone MR et al. (2022). Workplace Supported Recovery from Substance Use Disorders: Defining the Construct, Developing a Model, and Proposing an Agenda for Future Research.

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