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
1 in 10 have an Alcohol Use Disorder
1 in 12 have a drug use disorder

Overdose deaths are increasing, with >100k deaths in 2021.
The odds are greater of dying from an opioid overdose than a motor vehicle crash.

However, less than 5% are actively seeking treatment.

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

"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

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

Recovery Treatment Provider

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

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

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

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

Absenteism/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

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SCAN FOR MORE WORKPLACE RESOURCES

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