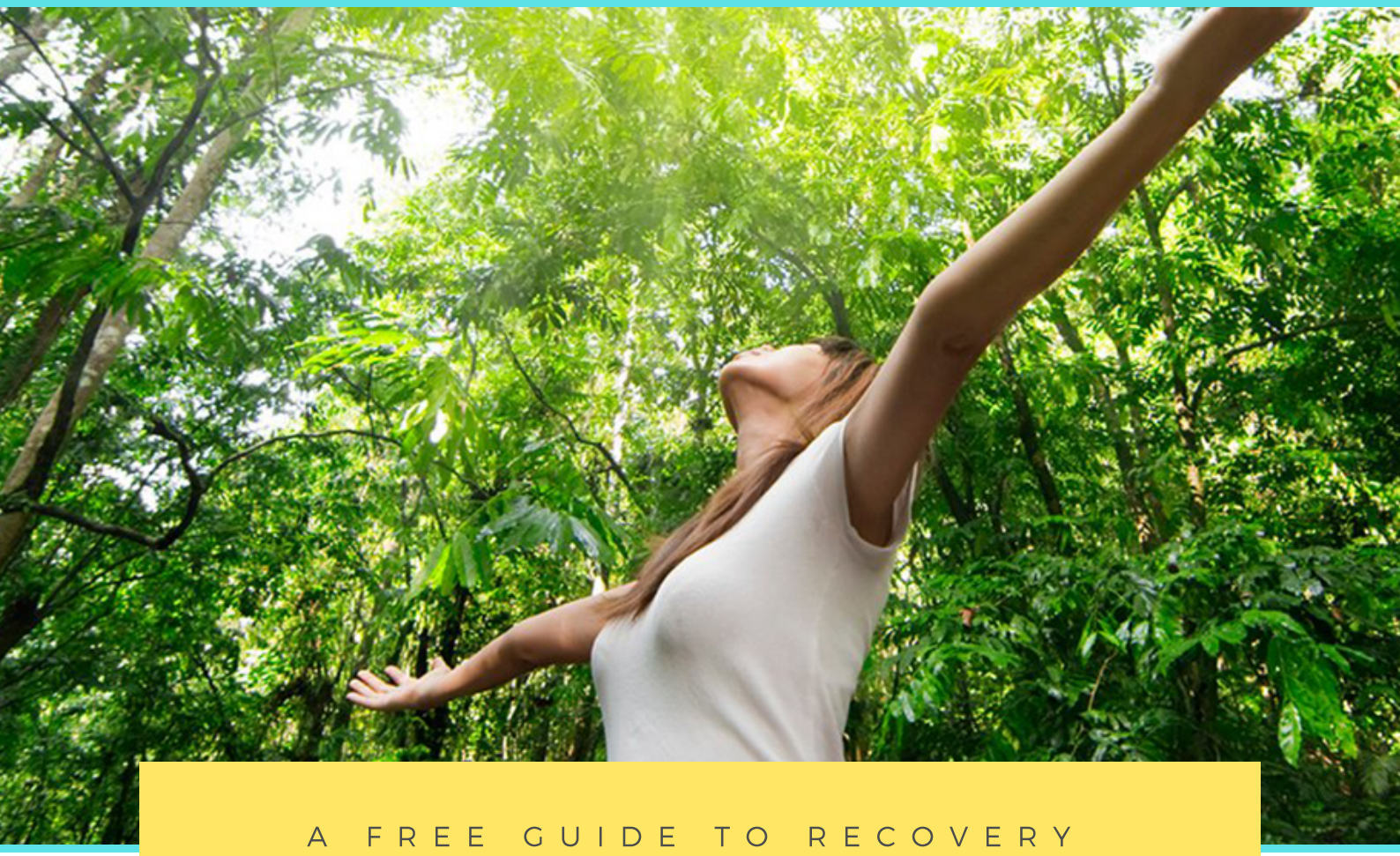
New Life



A FREE GUIDE TO RECOVERY

RECOVERY IN THE WORKPLACE

STRENGTHENING LIFE SKILLS SO THEY CAN SUCCESSFULLY MANAGE LIFE'S STRUGGLES MOVING FORWARD.

INTRODUCTION

Psychology Today reports that approximately 20 million workers across the United States experienced alcohol-related impairment at work at least once in the past year. In addition, in 2016, more than one in twenty-five Americans tested positive for illicit drugs in workplace drug screens.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) estimates that more than 75 percent of individuals with alcohol or illicit drug use disorders continue to maintain their employment but the workplace impact often goes undetected, with the ill-effects attributed to other factors. It is estimated that the economic cost that is related to alcohol and other drug use problems is approximately $600 billion in the U.S. each year.

Substance abuse can and does occur at all levels in the workplace it is not something that companies can afford to ignore. This eBook explores the 3 stages at which employers should be prepared with a plan of action to support employees with addiction:

PREVENTION

How can employers identify and help prevent substance misuse or relapse in the workforce while staying compliant with the law?

INTERVENTION

How can employers effectively intervene when substance abuse occurs?

RE-ENTRY

How can employers help those who have had substance misuse interfere with their work sustain employment?

1.PREVENTION

HOW CAN EMPLOYERS IDENTIFY AND HELP PREVENT SUBSTANCE MISUSE OR RELAPSE IN THE WORKFORCE WHILE STAYING COMPLIANT WITH THE LAW?

THE WARNING SIGNS

Problems with an employee's behavior, workplace performance and inability to fulfill their responsibilities can all be red flags that substance misuse could be an issue for an employee.

Some of the signs that employees may be struggling with a substance use disorder are:

- Unexplained absence from work
- Abuse of work hours
- Financial difficulty
- Reduced Productivity
- Poor Quality of work

ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

When addressing the issue of a suspected substance use disorder with an employee it is important to address the facts and not make any assumptions. Focus on what can be observed in their work performance and behavior, keeping specifically to topics that are part of their job role and relevant to the workplace environment.

Describe their behavior that has led to this conversation, giving specific examples of what the employee said or did. Don't be tempted to 'diagnose' the employee or try to act as a counselor or therapist. Your role as their employer or manager is to work with them to improve performance at work. Refer the employee to HR Services to complete the process of a referral to a reputable treatment facility for help if it is determined that he or she might need it.

DRUG TESTING & THE LAW

Laws on drug-free workplace programs are complex, but employers can follow basic steps to set a foundation for compliance.SAMHSA recommends the following best practices for all organizations that strive for a drug-free workplace:

1. CONSULT AN EMPLOYMENT ATTORNEY

Consult with a qualified employment attorney whenever you alter your drug-free workplace policy, or if you're launching a new one.

2. SET CLEAR PENALTIES

Clearly stipulate the penalties for policy violations. If your policy includes a drug-testing program, state who will be tested, when they will be tested, and what will happen to employees with a violation.

3. PUT IT IN WRITING

Every employee should receive and sign a written copy of your drug-free workplace policy. Verbal agreements and unsigned agreements have little legal standing.

4. PROVIDE TRAINING

Ensure that all supervisors are trained on how to detect and respond to workplace drug and alcohol misuse. Maintain attendance logs of all trainings.

5. DOCUMENT EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Maintain detailed and objective records on the performance of all employees. A documented performance issue often provides a basis for referring workers to employee assistance programs (EAPs).

6. DON'T RUSH TO JUDGEMENT

Do not take disciplinary action against a worker or accuse a worker of a policy violation simply because the employee's behavior seems impaired. Instead, try to clarify the reasons for the employee's impairment. If drug testing is a part of your workplace policy, obtain a verified test result before taking any action.

7. PROTECT PRIVACY

Hold discussions with employees about potential violations in private. Have another manager present to serve as a witness. Never accuse or confront an employee in front of his or her coworkers.

8. BE CONSISTENT

No individual employee or group of employees should receive special treatment. Inconsistencies in enforcement could be considered discrimination.

9. KNOW YOUR EMPLOYEES

Getting to know your employees can make it easier to identify problems early on.

10. INVOLVE YOUR EMPLOYEES

Workers at all levels of your organization should be involved with developing and implementing your drug-free workplace policy. This will reduce misunderstandings about the reasons for having a drug-free workplace program and help ensure that your policies and procedures are fair to everyone.

FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), an employee may take unpaid medical leave of up to 12 weeks in a 12-month period without providing specific details, as long as they've received a professional diagnosis. The leave must be for treatment; absence because of the employee's use of the substance, rather than for treatment, does not qualify for FMLA leave. Employees should confer with their HR Department to follow the proper protocol to implement FMLA.

FINAL NOTES ON PREVENTION

Employers can play an important role in preventing the unhealthy and hazardous use of substances by:

- Sending the message that drug and/or alcohol use in the workplace is not condoned
- Offering a supportive work environment that encourages those struggling with substance use disorders to feel comfortable in discussing their problems confidentially and seeking help without jeopardizing their jobs
- Incorporating information on the appropriate use of alcohol and legal substances like prescription medications into overall wellness and risk prevention strategies
- Providing factual information on the harmful health effects and consequences of substance use
- Reminding employees that excessive or binge drinking outside of work has an impact on safety and job performance at work

2.INTERVENTION

HOW CAN EMPLOYERS EFFECTIVELY INTERVENE WHEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE OCCURS?

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) help employers address a variety of employee problems and proactively deal with workplace issues that can lead to workplace violence, physical and mental health issues and/or declining morale among employees. EAPs have expertise in providing information, resources, referrals and counseling on issues such as substance use, mental health, stress, work and family problems, and a range of related concerns. These programs are staffed by professionals who provide preventive services and short-term problem-resolution services to individual employees and families. EAPs can provide confidential substance abuse screening, education, treatment referral and support in recovery. Coupled with health benefits, these programs play a vital role in encouraging employee wellness while reducing substance use and other health risks.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TREATMENT PROGRAM

Treatment for substance use disorder is not a one size fits all program and treatment plans may include one or more of the following:

- Individual and group counseling
- Inpatient and residential treatment
- Intensive outpatient treatment (IOP)
- Partial hospital programs (PHP)
- Dual Diagnosis/Co-occurring disorder treatment
- Medication assisted treatment (MAT)
- 12-Step approach
- Continuation of Care programs (CoC)
- Alternative therapies
- Naltrexone/Vivitrol therapy

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TREATMENT PROGRAM

One of the key differences in alcohol and drug addiction treatment programs is the level of intensity of the program. Addiction rehab programs can be a low commitment, such as a weekly group therapy session and AA meetings in the community, or they can be a full-time inpatient program with a duration of several weeks or months.

Inpatient addiction treatment is what people usually think of when they hear the word “rehab.” These residential treatment facilities require you to remain on the premises for a specific length of time while you receive treatment. Some inpatient recovery programs incorporate detox, while others require that you have not used substances for a set number of days before you can begin your program.

Outpatient treatment is an option where you visit a clinic or facility to receive treatment but do not have to stay there during treatment. Outpatient addiction programs offer more flexibility to those trying to manage their substance use disorder while holding down a job or keeping up with a busy family life. Outpatient treatment can be a great alternative to inpatient when flexibility is required.

Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOPs) are an effective approach to addiction treatment that bridges the gap between inpatient and outpatient programs. IOPs offer high levels of engagement while allowing clients to maintain their independence. IOP clients are not required to undergo 24/7 supervision at the treatment facility but are still involved in group and individual therapy programs for several hours per day or per week. IOPs are recommended for those who have attended a residential treatment program as a follow up plan of care.

MEDICALLY ASSISTED DRUG TREATMENT

Another consideration is the type of treatment approach: medical vs. non-medical. Alcohol, opioid and sedative-abusing patients may require detoxification. This medical detoxification process prevents several withdrawal symptoms and some medical complications that may accompany withdrawal. With Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), a medication is administered during treatment to provide relief from withdrawal symptoms as well as to provide a way to manage cravings in a controlled setting.

It is important to remember that medication assisted withdrawal is only the first step in treatment. Overall, research shows that maintaining a rehab program with medication assisted treatment that combines medication with behavioral therapies is most effective in treating addiction.

Alternative therapies such as the use of essential oils, nutritional sessions, yoga and mindfulness have been shown to be affective as part of an integrated treatment plan for substance use disorders. At New Life, we often make referrals to the YMCA, local CrossFit classes and other physical health providers to enhance our client's physical and recreational well-being.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A TREATMENT PARTNER

Getting treatment for substance use disorder is important and choosing the program that fits your employee's needs is essential. When interviewing addiction treatment centers be sure to ask questions, learn more about their programs and staff, and make sure they are accredited.

Here are a few things to look out for:

They have a qualified team of staff with addiction counseling credentials.

Their business is accredited. Check out their credentials. It's a good sign if the facility possesses the Joint Commission Accreditation for Addiction Treatment (JCAHO)'s Gold Seal for Behavioral Health; or if the facility is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

They offer medically assisted treatment.

They understand and are equipped to handle co-occurring disorders. Good quality programs will offer integrated treatment for co-occurring disorders. They should be able to provide mental health assessments, identify appropriate integrated treatment plans and prescribe medications if required.

They support long term recovery. A good treatment center will know that continuing care is a crucial phase of recovery. By this phase, a sponsor and recommended schedule of group counselling should be in place to ensure a solid recovery network before the treatment facility steps down its level of support.

REFERRING AN EMPLOYEE FOR TREATMENT

Once you have chosen a treatment partner for employee referrals, the treatment center staff will be able to guide you through the patient onboarding process and arrange the required screening and assessment to get a customized treatment plan underway.

Here are a few things to be prepared with when first reaching out to a treatment partner:

- It is helpful if you are able to give some background on the employee and what has prompted your referral.
- If the employee is comfortable with it, arrange for them to be present during the initial call with the treatment facility. This will help your treatment partner to gather all the personal and insurance information required.
- If the employee has tested positive in a workplace drug test, clarify what they have tested positive for.

SCREENING & ASSESSMENT

Once admitted to a treatment program, screening and assessment will take place to ensure the most suitable treatment plan is customized to meet individual needs. They may include blood, urine and breathalyzer testing; biopsychosocial, mental, physical and behavioral assessments. With the employee's permission, a reputable treatment partner should be able to provide you, as the employer, with a full report of the recommended treatment plan, start date and updates as treatment progresses.

3. RE-ENTRY

HOW CAN EMPLOYERS HELP THOSE WHO HAVE HAD SUBSTANCE MISUSE INTERFERE WITH THEIR WORK SUSTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

BENEFITS OF RE-ENTRY

Supporting employees in recovery from a substance use disorder can have substantial benefits in the long term. By choosing to support an employee throughout their treatment and recovery you are investing in their potential for sobriety and showing that you value them as a member of your team. When a workplace chooses to embrace employees in recovery, rather than stigmatizing and isolating them, the chances of recovery substantially improve. It costs significantly less to support a current employee than it would to recruit, train, and grow the skills of a new hire.

By supporting employees in recovery, you will be promoting employee engagement, job satisfaction and loyalty in your workforce. Employees who experience a high degree of job satisfaction have been found to work harder, show more engagement at work, have better attendance records and stay with the company longer than those with low job satisfaction.

THE COST OF TERMIMATION

Drug and alcohol abuse is one of the top reasons of termination for cause when an employee makes a severe error in actions or judgment, Many companies include policies specific to substance abuse in their codes of conduct to directly address the severity of the issue. Termination of an employee for reasons related to a possible substance use disorder can be seen as a loss of investment, typically costing businesses around one-fifth of the employees annual salary, according to the Center for American Progress. Financial losses to businesses include the costs of hiring, training, and the lower productivity of new hires. Firing also poses a high cost to employers in the short term. Employers are therefore faced with a financial and ethical question: does supporting the long-term recovery of an employee represent a better investment than replacing them?

HIRING EMPLOYEES IN RECOVERY

Even though there are legal protections for employees in recovery, that doesn't mean they won't face stigma and discrimination with potential employers. Many people in recovery struggle to get their lives and careers back on track after leaving treatment due to this stigma.

There are employee assistance programs available to help you offset the risks of investing in those in recovery and offering them the opportunity to re-enter the workforce. Supported employment programs often supplement the first-year salary of a participating candidate who might otherwise be at a disadvantage in securing work. These programs also continue to work with candidates after they are hired to help them keep their jobs and to thrive in their new workplace. By partnering with a supported employment program, you just might land a dream candidate while also saving money and receiving valuable training services from an outside organization.

RETURNING TO WORK

Once treatment has been successfully completed, it is important to have a plan in place to support your employee's reintegration into the workplace. You should make sure that they don't feel overwhelmed or stressed but at the same time, communicate openly to ensure expectations are set to support their recovery journey in the workplace. It is important that the employee understands that while you want them to be successful in their recovery, they still need to comply with clearly discussed and documented performance guidelines and expectations.

MONITORING RECOVERY

Support your employee's recovery by keeping in regular communication with the addiction treatment facility that you referred them to. This will help you to keep track of their recovery progress as well as giving you the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about how you can help or offer support along the way. The addiction counselor should be able to provide invaluable advice when it comes to preparing a back to work plan for your employee. A back to work plan may include requirements for regular drug testing, progress reviews, and participation in the treatment center's aftercare program.

RETURN-TO-WORK AGREEMENTS

A Return-to-Work Agreement (RTWA) is a written document that outlines the expectations the employer and treatment partner have of an employee who has completed treatment for a substance use disorder, following a referral by their employer.

This agreement can be used if an employee has violated the drug-free workplace policy and has been provided the opportunity to participate in rehabilitation as a condition of continued or re-employment.

Developing a RTWA requires:

- Coordination between the employee, employer and treatment center, as well as the employee assistance program provider if the company has one.
- Compliance with company policies and legal obligations as well as with the medical recommendations made by the addiction treatment center.

RESPECTING PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important to respect your employee's privacy and confidentiality whilst they are undergoing treatment and after they have returned to the workplace. If the employee wishes to share what they are going through with you or their colleagues that will be at their choice and the sensitivity and confidentiality of such conversations should be respected.

CONCLUSION

Substance misuse in the workplace is not uncommon but poses a serious threat to employers if not addressed and managed correctly. Having a plan in place for prevention, intervention and re-entry in the event of an employee struggling with substance use disorder will help you to support your employees through their diagnosis, treatment and recovery in a sensitive but professional manner.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

From drafting a substance free workplace policy to establishing a process for reintegrating employees in recovery into the workplace, here are some additional resources that will help you be as prepared as possible to address substance abuse in your workplace:

SAMHSA's Drug-Free Workplace Toolkit

Opioid Prevention at Work

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services "Partners for Recovery"

National Business Group on Health "Employers Guide to Workplace Substance Abuse"

ABOUT NEW LIFE

For more than three decades, New Life Addiction Treatment Pasadena Maryland has been changing lives. A dual-diagnosis center, we provide outpatient treatment tailored to strengthen those struggling with substance abuse, drug and alcohol addiction, and mental health issues. Our proven reputation comes from treating more than just those issues, though; we treat the entire person. With an emphasis on total abstinence from alcohol and drugs, we help clients explore their behaviors, identify challenges, and develop a healthy, clean, and sober lifestyle … maintaining recovery through a coordination of care.

CALL US TODAY AT 410 421 7091