

Issue Resources Brief #11 Available to For Employers Employers

*This brief could save
your company money
and takes less than 2
minutes to read!*

Employers have a wide variety of resources at their disposal that can assist them in determining how best to mitigate the potential workplace problems associated with substance abuse.

DEFINITIONS

- ◆ **Substance abuse and addiction:** The maladaptive pattern of drug and/or alcohol use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress such as failure to fulfill social or occupational obligations or recurrent use in situations in which it is physically dangerous to do so or which end in legal problems. At some point, changes in the brain can turn abuse into addiction, a chronic, relapsing illness.¹
- ◆ **Substance abuse treatment:** There are many effective forms of treatment for substance abuse, including brief intervention, individual therapy, group therapy, inpatient treatment, medication and self-help. Different types of intervention are appropriate for different individuals, and each individual may need a variety of therapies during the course of treatment. Treatment for substance abuse is as effective as treatment for other chronic conditions.
- ◆ **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** An EAP helps identify and resolve productivity problems affecting employees who are impaired by personal concerns. EAPs come in many different forms, from telephone-based services to on-site programs. Face-to-face programs provide more comprehensive services for employees with substance use disorders, including screening, treatment referrals and follow-up care.

Basic Resources

An **excellent resource for employers**, covering most topics addressed in this Brief, is *An Employer's Guide to Behavioral Health Services: A Roadmap and Recommendations for Evaluating, Designing and Implementing Behavioral Health Services*, published by the National Business Group on Health. See: http://www.wbgh.org/pdfs/fullreport_behavioralHealthservices.pdf.

Addressing Substance Abuse in the Workplace

The following will provide employers with a general orientation to the issues involved in addressing substance abuse in the workplace:

- ◆ The **National Business Group on Health** offers extensive relevant information on its Web site, <http://www.wbgh.org/>.
- ◆ The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a federal agency, has a Division of Workplace Programs that offers comprehensive information for employers: <http://dwp.samhsa.gov/index.aspx>.
- ◆ **Federal Occupational Health (FOH)**, a federal agency, is a component of the United States Public Health Service. FOH works with federal organizations to help them meet their occupational health needs. Its Web site provides helpful explanations of their work, much of which is relevant to private employers as well: <http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/Public/WhoWeAre/whowecare.asp>
- ◆ Another federal government Web site offers information on a variety of **diseases and conditions**, including drug abuse and addiction and alcohol abuse and addiction: <http://www.healthfinder.gov/scripts/Topics.asp?context=5&keyword=113&Branch=5>
- ◆ The National Institute on Drug Abuse (<http://www.nida.nih.gov/>) offers extensive information on **specific drugs**, while the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>) offers resources on prevention and treatment of **alcohol problems**.
- ◆ The Web site of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (**ONDCP**) also provides a variety of helpful resources and links: <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/index.html>.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
www.samhsa.gov

Creating a Corporate Substance Abuse Policy

Several resources are available to help an employer create a corporate substance abuse policy:

- ◆ **SAMHSA's helpline** can assist employers directly: 1-800-967-5752 or <http://workplace.samhsa.gov/helpline/helpline.aspx>
- ◆ The U.S. Department of Labor has a **Drug-Free Workplace Program Builder** <http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/workingpartners/dfworkplace/policy.asp> that helps organizations create policies that are appropriate to their own cultures, settings and needs.

Understanding Substance Abuse Treatment

There are further resources that can help an employer better understand substance abuse treatment:

- ◆ The Web site of the **Partnership for a Drug-Free America** offers explanations of substance abuse, its treatment and the meaning of recovery: <http://www.drugfree.org/Intervention/WhereStart/>
- ◆ The Web site of the U.S. Department of Labor's **Working Partners** program offers information about substance abuse addiction, treatment, recovery, screening and assessment. <http://www.dol.gov/workingpartners/welcome.html>

Finding and Using an Employee Assistance Program

An employer who is interested in finding or contracting with an Employee Assistance Program can look to the following resources for help:

- ◆ The Employee Assistance Professionals Association provides an on-line **"Guide to Employee Assistance Programs and Services"** that enables searches by geographic area and by specialty sought, including design and evaluation of EAPs, services to small businesses, substance abuse professional services and many others. <http://www.eapassn.org/public/providers/>
- ◆ The *Guide* developed by the **National Business Group on Health** (cited above) also provides information and advice about the use of EAPs.

Developing a Corporate Health Promotion Program

Organizational health promotion programs focus primarily on improving the corporate culture and on enhancing the environment in which people work. Here are some resources that can help employers better understand and create workplace health and wellness programs:

- ◆ <http://workplace.samhsa.gov/HealthWellnessSafety/index.aspx> offers information about the **value of corporate wellness programs**.
- ◆ The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine has extensive information on its Web site regarding **importance of health in the work place**. At <http://www.acoem.org/>, under "Special Initiatives," see "Health and Productivity."
- ◆ The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine presents annual Corporate Health Achievement Awards that recognize organizations with exemplary health, safety, and environmental programs. Their **Corporate Health Excellence Checklist** offers a useful starting point for employers who are thinking about these issues: <http://www.chaa.org/pdfs/checklist.pdf>

Learning about Recovery

Treatment and recovery, while interconnected, are not the same. Here are some helpful **explanations of recovery** from substance use disorders:

- ◆ The U.S. Department of Labor's Working Partners Web site offers a variety of useful resources: <http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/workingpartners/sab/recovery.asp>
- ◆ For those who are interested in reading the **individual stories of people who are in recovery**, the not-for-profit advocacy organization Faces and Voices for Recovery offers many on its Web site: <http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/resources/index.php>

Reference

¹*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition*, pp. 181-183. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994.

