

Raising Employee Awareness of Drug and Alcohol Misuse

1st August 2021

Raising employee awareness about alcohol and other drug abuse sends a positive message that your organisation cares, and that everyone needs to be involved in supporting prevention and recovery. Raising the subject can also encourage a spirit of cooperation.

What can you do?

Get to know the facts yourself. It's important to set a good example; take time to understand what addiction is, and notice any stereotypes you hold. The more familiar and understanding you are of addiction, the better help you will be. Get comfortable talking about addiction, and remember it is not a character flaw.

Spread the word. Raising awareness among employees about substance use and offering the appropriate resources to employees in need, can help support a safe and healthy workplace for all.

Challenge stereotypes. Knowledge helps dispel myths and stereotypes about addiction. It also helps raise awareness of dangers about prescription drug misuse, and the growing opioid abuse crisis that is striking families worldwide. It is likely that you have employees whose lives have been touched by substance abuse. This is a common problem for many people. Having conversations about addiction will help to break the stigma.

Promote use of the assistance programme. Make sure employees know how to contact their assistance programme and encourage them to take advantage of the confidential support for themselves or an immediate family member. Assistance programmes offer confidential assessments, short-term counselling, and referrals to local resources. They have been found to be highly effective in supporting employees and their loved ones struggling with addiction.

Remind your team of their health benefits. If your organisation offers health benefits with comprehensive coverage for addiction, be sure employees are aware of this. These benefits might include coverage for an addiction assessment, treatment, and/or counselling.

Encourage support groups. Break the stigma and encourage programme or support groups in your workplace that would benefit employees and their families who may be struggling with addiction or are in recovery. Such schemes, whether they take place in person or

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online, have been shown to be highly effective.

Recognise signs of work stress. Be aware that there are factors in the workplace that might contribute to employee substance abuse. Work stress and a culture where drinking is the norm, are two contributing factors. Encourage employees to take advantage of stress-management resources available through your organisation's assistance programme.

Be positive. Send the message that seeking help is a positive step forward. The stigma of substance abuse can keep many people from seeking treatment. Raising awareness among employees about substance abuse and offering the appropriate resources to employees in need lifts the stigma and helps support a safe and healthy workplace for all.