



Supervisor Newsletter

Government and Business Response to the Opioid Epidemic

There has been much focus recently on government attempts to combat the opioid crisis in America and stop the flow of fentanyl into the country. But when policymakers consider measures to combat the drug crisis, it's crucial they also consider the demand side of the problem, and the role businesses can play.

In addition to government efforts, employers can and should be called on to do their part to help reduce the problems caused by the opioid and fentanyl epidemic.

The opioid epidemic has imposed a substantial financial burden on businesses through lost productivity, increased healthcare costs, and greater costs for workers' compensation claims. Additionally, employers are adversely affected by the drug crisis through local opioid use, as an increase in local drug abuse can result in a reduction in the number of qualified job candidates.

All employers should be interested in implementing any

program that addresses the well-being of workers, but in this era of increased substance abuse and drug overdoses, helping to prevent addiction ought to be one of the most important workplace goals at every organization.

Most Opioid Abusers Employed

According to the U.S. Substance Abuse Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), 48.7 million Americans suffer from a substance abuse disorder. That's more than 17% of the U.S. population. Additionally, SAMHSA reports that more than 60% of adults who report past-year opioid misuse are currently employed. This means the largest concentration of demand for addictive opioid drugs is in the American workplace. We must attack the demand-side of the U.S. opioid crisis at this enormous concentration of demand.

The workplace is a significant part of employees' daily lives and employers are uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role in preventing and treating opioid use disorder, both within and beyond their workplaces. Companies have a great deal of influence in the lives of employees, and employers can wield considerable influence across all stages of the

continuum: drug prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery. Companies and corporations can and should save lives by implementing and maintaining comprehensive drug free workplace programs.

Supervisor's Role

Supervisors within a drug free workplace program should have a desire to help their employees remain drug free. Managers who want to promote employee well-being and maintain a safe workplace environment must accept the responsibility of addressing employee substance abuse problems.

Awareness, training, and drug education are essential in attacking the demand-side of the drug problem, and educating employees on the problems surrounding addiction and substance abuse can go a long way in reducing the harm. As a part of implementing and maintaining a drug free workplace program, supervisors can distribute information about drug and alcohol risks, host workshops on healthy alternatives, and provide wellness options.

Supervisors should also make every effort to become well-trained on how to identify signs of substance abuse such as: unexplained absences, increased accidents, reduced productivity, and erratic or impulsive behavior.

Workplace-based Help

Employees struggling with a substance use disorder need support and companies should have processes in place that provide treatment and counseling for those in need. Supervisors should be fully aware of and promote these treatment programs.

Employee Wellness

Supervisors must focus on creating supportive work environments that address addiction and recovery issues with empathy. This includes helping by offering a good work-life balance, managing fair and equitable leave policies, and promoting stress management techniques and options that employees can implement at work and home.

When supervisors focus on preventing substance abuse at work and creating a culture that supports recovery, companies and organizations will benefit from a healthier, more productive workforce. Not only will this help employees live better lives, but employers will see a reduced turnover rate, fewer injuries and accidents, and a reduction in healthcare expenses overall. Through supportive policies and approaches, and with the participation of supervisors, companies can work toward fulfilling their corporate social responsibility and cultivating a healthy, strong workforce.



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