Opioid Use – What You Need to Know
Workplace Essentials

Best Care EAP Can Help!
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402-354-8000 | 800-801-4182
www.BestCareEAP.org
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Introduction

You can’t go more than a few days without seeing a headline about opioid use and the massive toll it’s taking on our families, communities, and society. What is less discussed is that opioid use at work is also a serious concern. Today we will:

- Explain why opioid use is a concern for managers and employees
- Test your knowledge of this issue
- Discuss what strategies managers and employees can use to address opioid use at work and its impact on performance
- Review how Best Care EAP can help

Why is it a Concern?

- More than 90 Americans a day die from opioid overdoses.
- The misuse of opioids—including prescription pain relievers, heroin, and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl—is a national crisis that affects public health as well as social and economic welfare.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the total "economic burden" of prescription opioid misuse alone in the United States is $78.5 billion a year, including the costs of healthcare, lost productivity, use treatment, and criminal justice involvement.

Test Your Knowledge of Opioid Misuse

<table>
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<tr>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1. More than 52 million people in the U.S. over the age of 12 have used prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons.</td>
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Opioid Use – What You Need to Know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
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<td>2. Every day, 34 people in the U.S. die from an overdose of prescription painkillers.</td>
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<td>3. The misuse of prescription drugs in the workplace can lead to an increase in workers’ compensation claims, injuries and emergency room visits.</td>
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<td>4. Prescription drug abuse affects employees by increasing the risks of driving to and from work, operating heavy equipment, and making critical errors.</td>
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<td>5. Prescription drug abuse can be hard to monitor because there is wide variation in how doctors in different states prescribe painkillers.</td>
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<td>6. Seventy percent of people who abuse prescription drugs get them from friends or relatives.</td>
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<td>7. The three most common categories of abused prescription drugs are painkillers, tranquilizers and stimulants.</td>
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<td>8. Teens who abuse prescription drugs mainly buy them from dealers on the street.</td>
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<td>9. Prescription drugs account for 10 percent of workers’ compensation medical costs.</td>
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A Growing Crisis

- Employers across the country are facing a crisis of epidemic proportions.
- Misuse of opioid painkillers such as OxyContin and Percocet now exceed car crashes as the leading cause of unintentional death in the United States.
- Perhaps that’s not surprising, considering sales of prescription opioid painkillers in the U.S. have risen 300 percent since 1999.

More Facts

- Roughly 21% to 29% of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain misuse them.
- Between 8% and 12% percent develop an opioid use disorder.
- An estimated 4% to 6% percent who misuse prescription opioids transition to heroin.
- About 80% of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids.
Closer to Home...

- In Nebraska, the focus has been of preventing opioid misuse.
- The State of Nebraska organized a coalition in 2016 to head off the opioid crisis; its efforts have focused on three fronts:
  - Prevention
  - Treatment
  - Law enforcement
- Since January of 2017, all pharmacies have been required to report every narcotic dispensed in the state. This is to make it more difficult for people to “doctor shop.”
- While the nation at large faces an opioid epidemic, methamphetamine is still the number one threat in Nebraska and Iowa.
- However, the rate of drug overdose deaths has increased more than 20 percent over the past decade with opioid overdoses killing 54 Nebraskans in 2015 alone.
- Synthetic opioids such as Fentanyl are also a problem. (Fentanyl is similar to morphine, but is 50 to 100 times more potent!)
- In 2014 and 2015, drug deaths linked to Fentanyl were particularly high

Opioid Use Dos and Don’ts

Do’s

- Discuss the long-term effects of opioid use with your doctor.
- Ask if other medications for pain are available that are less addictive—or ask about nonmedical pain management alternatives.
- Always take prescription medication as it’s prescribed.
- Store these drugs safely.
- Dispose of opioids you don’t take by dropping them off at a pharmacy.

Don’ts

- *Do not* take “just a little bit more.”
- If a family member or friend appears addicted to a pain medication, do not enable him or her with money or by helping him or her obtain prescriptions.
- Drive while on any substance.
- Don’t risk working while impaired.
- Don’t mix opioids and alcohol.
- Don’t use opioids for longer than prescribed.
Why Invest Time and Resources in the Struggle

Because 75% of Substance Users Are Employed Full-Time

According to the Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014), approximately 21.5 million American aged 12 years and older (i.e., 8.1% of the population) had abused drugs and/or alcohol in the prior year. Of those, 2.6 million had problems with both alcohol and drugs, 4.5 million had problems with drugs but not alcohol, and 14.4 million had problems with alcohol only. SAMHSA also estimates that 75% of substance abusers are employed full-time.

Because You Have a Responsibility to Yourself, Your Coworkers, Your Organization, and Your Family

You share in the responsibility to maintain a safe, secure, and productive work environment. Substance-abusing employees represent a significant and continuing threat to those efforts. Substance abusing employees:

- Are 1/3 less productive than their coworkers
- Miss nearly 50% more work days than their peers
- Are two times more likely to have unexcused work absences
- Are three times more likely to be late for work
- Are five times more likely to injure themselves or others

Confronting Opioid Abuse – What Needs to Be Done

Understand Your Role

- As a member of this organization, your job is to help maintain a safe, secure, and productive environment for yourself, your workers, and your customers/visitors.
- That said your job is NOT to:
  - Diagnose drug and alcohol problems
  - Provide counseling or therapy
  - Be a police officer

Know What Tools and Resources Are Available to You

- Your primary tools are:
  - Your understanding of drug and alcohol abuse
  - Your company’s substance abuse policy
- You also have access to advice and support from:
  - Your supervisor
  - Human Resources
Educate Yourself on Opioid Use

- Opioid Use Disorder is a medical condition characterized by a problematic pattern of opioid use that causes clinically significant impairment or distress.
- Most common indicators:
  - Absenteeism
  - Reduced productivity or quality of work
  - Behavior problems
  - Obvious impairment

Employ Strategies to Help Address Opioid Use

- Get to know your coworkers. You may be able to spot trouble early.
- Focus on the quality of work product and adherence to workplace policies and procedures.
- Do not judge or diagnose your colleagues -- gently remind them of company policies and EAP.

With Obvious Impairment, Proceed Carefully

- Determining when an employee is obviously impaired by drugs or alcohol isn’t as straightforward as it seems. This is because a variety of conditions and circumstances can account for the physical, behavioral, speech, and performance indicators typically associated with substance abuse. These include:
  - Diabetes
  - Physical or emotional trauma
  - Brain and neurological diseases and disorders such as tumors, epilepsy, Parkinson’s disease, etc.
  - Allergic reactions to food and legally prescribed medications
- That’s why it’s critical that, as you’re on the lookout for indications of possible impairment, you follow your company’s substance abuse policy.

Indicators of Obvious Impairment

| General Indicators | • Unusual physical symptoms or behaviors (unsteady gait, hyperactive/manic activity, sudden weight loss, dental problems, wearing long sleeves on hot days, etc.)
| | • A sudden lack of concern over personal appearance and hygiene
| | • Frequent tardiness or unexplained absences |
## Behavioral Indicators – i.e., It’s Uncharacteristic for Them to Have/Be…
- Dilated pupils
- Constricted pupils
- Nervousness
- Sleepiness/fatigue
- Confusion
- Excitement
- Talkativeness
- Exaggerated politeness
- Problems with memory, concentration and motivation
- Poor decision making
- Frequent small accidents resulting in minor injuries or broken objects
- Insulting, quarrelsome, combative, or uncooperative behavior

## Unusual Actions – i.e., It’s Uncharacteristic for Them to Have/Be…
- Sweating
- Crying
- Fighting
- Slow reaction time
- Quick movements
- Tremors

## Speech-Related Indicators – i.e., It’s Uncharacteristic for Them to Have/Be…
- Slow
- Slurred
- Rapid
- Rambling
- Confused

## Balance-Related Indicators – i.e., It’s Uncharacteristic for Them to Have/Be…
- Stumbling
- Staggering
- Needing support
- Falling

### Respond Appropriately
- Document your observations
- Notify your supervisor and/or HR
- Follow your organization’s substance abuse policy
Well-Meaning Actions That Sabotage Your Efforts

Enabling Their Substance Misuse

- Covering up misuse
- Rationalizing misuse
- Withdrawing from or avoiding employees
- Blaming them for their situations
- Controlling their behavior
- Threatening them with consequences you can’t or won’t follow through on

Allowing Yourself to be Diverted from Holding Them Accountable

- Playing upon your sympathy
- Accepting their repeated excuses or apologies
- Tolerating their denials and protestations of innocence in the face of clear evidence
- Allowing them to use anger or threats to deter you
- Permitting pity for their situation to keep you from doing what has to be done
- Being put off by their crying

Don’t

- Diagnosis their problems
- Moralize
- Discuss their drug/alcohol use with anyone other than your supervisor, HR, or Best Care EAP
- Be misled by diversionary tactics
- Enable substance abusers

Do

- Follow your organization’s drug and alcohol policy
- Seek input before taking action (If you suspect an employee is misusing opioids, familiarize yourself with your policies and seek input from your HR professionals. These situations are complicated; you don’t want to go down the wrong road.)
- Remember, you have a resource in Best Care EAP!
Opioid Use – What You Need to Know

**Best Care Training Program Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Title:</th>
<th>Opioid Use – What You Need to Know</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Facilitator:</th>
<th>Ann Gillaspie</th>
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Thank you for attending today’s session. Please share your impressions below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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1. The material covered in this program will benefit my professional and/or personal life.

2. The amount of material covered was appropriate for the time frame.

3. The services of Best Care EAP were reviewed.

4. The material was clearly presented and easy to follow.

5. The facilitator was enthusiastic about the topic.

6. The facilitator encouraged class participation and interaction.

7. Effective examples and illustrations were used.

8. The facilitator used effective presentation techniques (e.g. eye contact, vocal projection, gestures, etc.).

9. I would recommend this training to coworkers/colleagues.

10. What was particularly helpful about the training?

11. What would you recommend changing about the training?

12. If you would like to receive email updates about ongoing Best Care training opportunities, please give us your work email address:

__________________________________________________________

Scan and email this document to eap@bestcareeap.org