

# Drug abuse and addiction are family affairs. Your employees have families too. What can employers do to help?

Drug abuse and addiction can happen in any family—through no fault of their own. When this distracts your employees, your workplace suffers too.

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## Five Steps for EMPLOYERS

If your employees struggle with alcohol/drug abuse or addiction in their family:

- 1. Establish an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

Or if you have one, remind employees about it on an ongoing basis.
- 2. Create a Forum for Learning About Drug Abuse**

Employees not only deal with drug abuse among their children or spouses, but also experience the complications associated with drugs taken by elderly parents. By creating avenues for employees to learn about and constructively address these family issues, they will be more likely to stay focused while on the job. Consider starting a monthly “Family Friday” forum that features outside lunchtime speakers who deliver presentations for employees on family and community-related topics. It would be a great opportunity to promote your EAP services as well.
- 3. Refer Employees to Your Human Resources Department**

Employees may be eligible to take a family medical leave due to the addiction of a family member. Under the federal Family Medical Leave Act, the time off can be consecutive or intermittent, based on the family needs. For example, parents who struggle with a drug abusing teenager often need to take excused absences from work for their child’s court
- 4. Create an Organizational Environment That Supports Employees**

Establishing a supportive environment is key to helping employees deal with family problems such as addiction. Creating policies, holding forums, and creating an employee assistance program are a good start. Employers must also refer employees and promote access to these policies, forums, services and benefits. Offhanded discriminatory and judgmental remarks are a tremendous barrier to access and cannot be tolerated at any level of the organization. Organization leadership must set examples with their own attitudes and behaviors. Drug abuse is widespread, not just something that happens within certain families. Remember that nowadays 8 out of 10 teens will drink before leaving high school and half will use marijuana.
- 5. Make Sure Your Health Care Package Covers Addiction Treatment**

Your workplace will ultimately pay a cost in work performance when employees have no benefits to cover treatment of addictions for family members.

# Five Steps for EMPLOYEES

If you are struggling with alcohol/drug abuse or addiction in your family:

## 1. Get Support

You are not the only employee who struggles with drug abuse in the family and you do not have to do this alone. Check out community self-help groups such as Al-Anon, or other groups recommended by your EAP, health care provider, or friends.

## 2. Take Time Off Work

There will be times when you need to be away from work. Talk with your supervisor and human resources department in advance to find out what absences will be excused. Ask about consecutive or intermittent leave allowed under the Family Medical Leave Act and whether you might qualify. Determine whether you have any paid time off available and what you need to do to access paid time off.

## 3. Let Your Supervisor Know

Tell your supervisor that you are distracted by personal issues and ask for help in keeping focused. Your supervisor may have some good ideas that can help you stay on track.

## 4. Access Benefits

Find out if you have access to an employee assistance program and use it. Talk with your human resources department to determine if your health insurance covers treatment for addiction of family members.

## 5. Work With Your Supervisor

Supervisors are frequently able to provide more flexibility if they know what you need and if you demonstrate your commitment to meeting your job expectations. Are you in need of a flexible work schedule? Can you use your work computer to access information on the internet about drug abuse? Can you use a private office to schedule counseling sessions for yourself or family members? How should you handle unplanned absences? What does your supervisor consider acceptable and unacceptable?



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