Workplace substance use Prevention Programs

National Safety Council Survey of Employers' Substance Use Programs:

76% do not offer training

81% lack a workplace policy

41% who drug test don't test for synthetic opioids

Many lack sufficient insurance coverage for substance use and mental health treatment

70% of People with Substance Use Disorder Are Working

What is the impact on the workplace?

- Lost productivity = $2 billion
- Absenteeism and presenteeism = $10 billion
- Increased workers' compensation costs = 4X per claim
- Increased health care costs
- Increased lost work time
- Compromises workplace safety and health

What Is the Impact of Substance Use Disorder on Workers and Their Families?

- Job loss
- Mental and physical stress deterioration
- Financial ruin
- Divorce
- Loss of child custody
- Prison
- Death

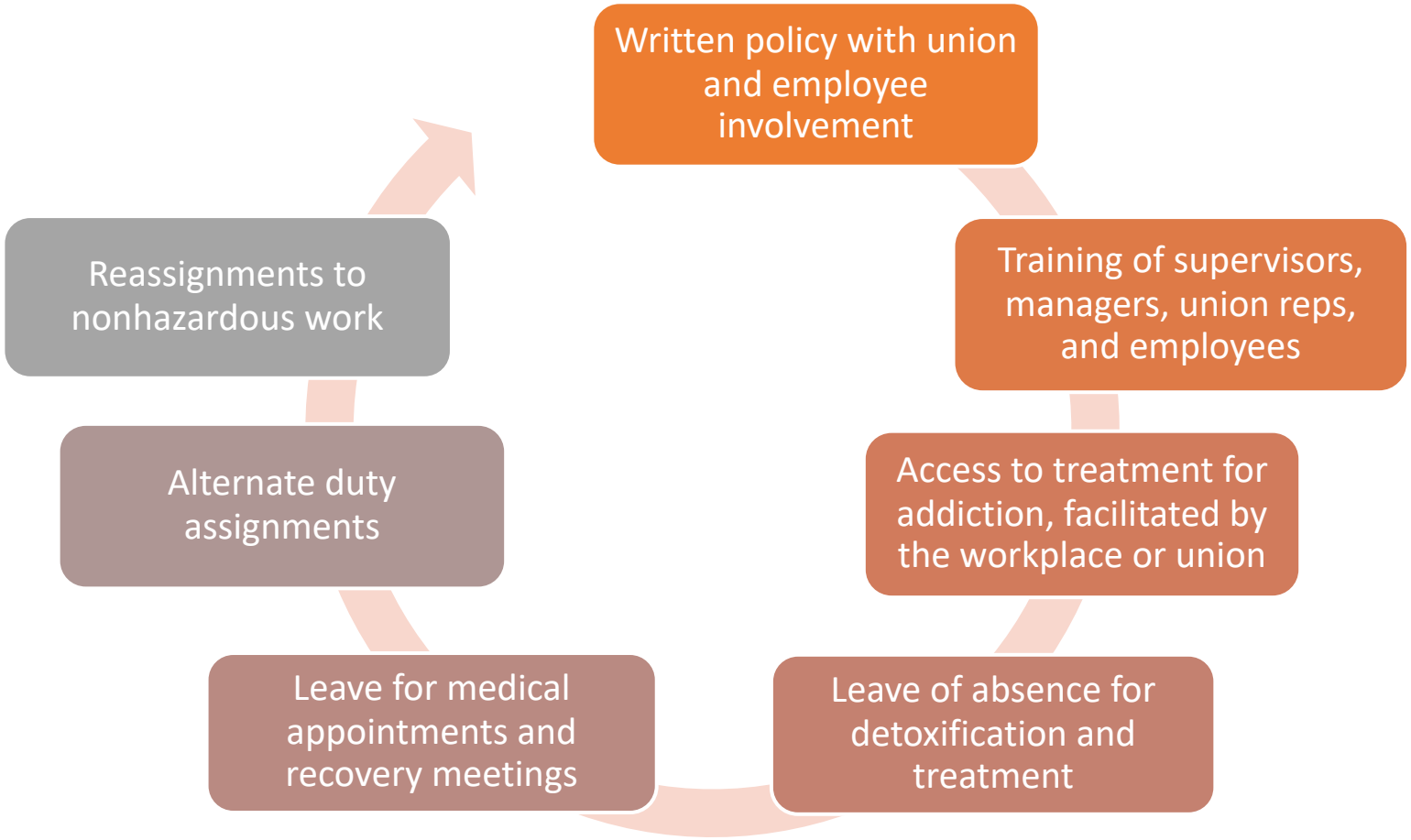
What's the Impact of Punitive Policies?

A high-performing employee with 20 years of seniority has a back injury, is prescribed opioids for pain, and subsequently develops an opioid use disorder.

- How might this employee react to the drug-free workplace policy?
- Will he come forward to speak to his supervisor or HR or the union rep?
- How do the terms "zero-tolerance" and "will lead to discipline or termination" impact employees struggling with substance use disorder coming forward for help?

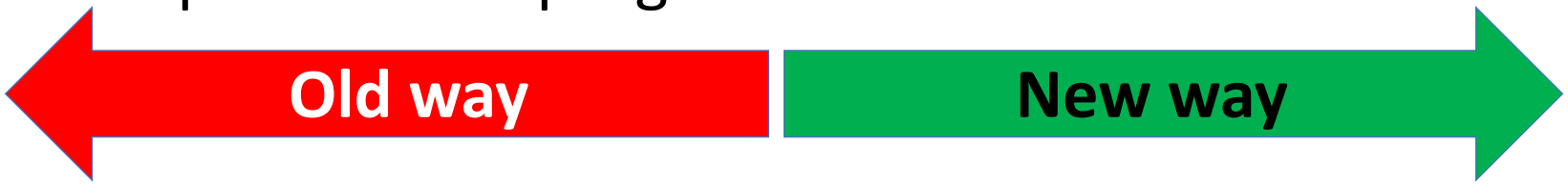
“Is it finding work through recovery, or finding recovery through work?” he asked. “I don’t think recovery would have been so successful if I hadn’t been working.”

Supportive Drug-Free Policy



Employers Should Reevaluate Their Approach

- Move from reactive to proactive.
- Understand jobs are a lifeline, providing a paycheck, daily structure, a sense of purpose and identity, stability, and social support.
- Create an environment where it is safe to talk about mental health and substance use.
- Ensure confidentiality.
- Establish return-to-work policies.
- Work with workplace stakeholders to revise policies and programs.



Treatment/Recovery Support for Workers

Alternative-to-discipline (ATD) programs help workers recover from addiction and return to work without losing their jobs.

These programs have been successful by providing a nonpunitive pathway for workers to obtain treatment and keep their employment.

- The worker enters a substance use treatment program.
- An individual sobriety and recovery program is established.
- Return-to-work agreements involve drug testing and participation in recovery programs. In health care and law enforcement, no access to narcotics.
- Continued treatment and monitoring for periods of 2 to 5 years.

Workplace Supported Recovery Program (WSRP)

- A WSRP aims to **prevent exposure** to workplace factors that could cause or perpetuate a substance use disorder
- **Lowers barriers** to seeking and receiving care and maintaining recovery
- Educates its management team and workers on SUDs to **reduce stigma**
- **Changes** punitive workplace policies into supportive ones

Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW)

- RFWs are committed to making foundational change in the way they hire, treat, and support workers living in or seeking recovery from substance use and mental health disorders
- RFW means moving from a “zero tolerance” policy emphasizing disciplinary action to a “recovery” policy emphasizing help, hope, and realizing the economic potential of healthy employees

Key Elements: Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW)

1. Employer commits to establishing an RFW.
2. Collaborate with employees, unions, and communities.
3. Develop a culture that reduces stigma.
4. Improve safety and support injured workers.
5. Proactively identify and address work stress and mental health issues.
6. Offer comprehensive benefits covering SUDs, MOUD, aftercare, and counseling.
7. Acknowledge recovery from SUD and OUD as a strength.

Toolkit for Injured Workers to Avoid Opioid Misuse

- Stickers
- Checklists
- Questions to ask your doctor
- Drug disposal materials
- Fact sheets

Injured Workers Should Be Prepared to Talk to Their Doctor about:

- Opioid avoidance. Discuss alternative pain treatment methods such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, ice, physical therapy, chiropractic care, etc.
- Dosage and duration.
- Expectations. 100% pain-free may not be realistic.
- Risks. If a prescription is given, make sure you know the risks

Store Medications in a Safe Place.
Dispose of Unused Amounts.
Do Not Share Prescriptions!

Survey on where users got their prescriptions:

- 51.3% - Given by, bought from, or took from a friend or relative
- 34.7% - Prescription from 1 doctor
- 6.5% - Bought from dealer, or stranger

Legal Rights May Include:

- Under the **Affordable Care Act:** expansion of **access and parity** for mental health and substance use treatment.
- **Reasonable accommodations** under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- **Collective bargaining** around drug testing, access to treatment, education and training, mental health and substance use benefits, treatment and procedures, and employee assistance programs.
- **The right to union representation**, “Weingarten rights” for unionized employees in connection with an investigatory interview, including referral for a workplace drug and alcohol test.
- **State sick leave and family medical leave laws** and regulations.