



## Employee Assistance Program for Addictions



**A comprehensive service listing on treatment for  
Substance Addictions at the workplace.**



The Solace Sabah Retreat Sdn. Bhd.  
[www.solacesabah.com](http://www.solacesabah.com)

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# Awareness

The most important step with addiction is being aware of what it is and what it does at the workplace.



## What is addiction?



At the Solace  
Sabah Retreat

**Addiction is a brain disease that disrupts the mechanisms responsible for cognitive, emotional and social behavior. These changes in the brain lead to “uncontrollable, compulsive drug-seeking and use.”**

While many addicts would like to stop using substances, they may find it extremely difficult or impossible to do so. This is not because they are weak; rather, the neurological changes associated with addiction cause the addict to lose the ability to make conscious decisions about whether or not to use drugs. When a person abuses a substance, the brain is flooded with dopamine.

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that resides in the parts of the brain that control movement, emotion, cognition, motivation and feelings of pleasure. When these systems are overloaded by substances, a person experiences euphoria—a feeling that many drug abusers attempt to recreate by repeatedly abusing a substance. However, the brain of a substance abuser adjusts by producing less dopamine or reducing the number of receptors that can receive or transmit signals. As long as people are addicted to or abusing substances, they cannot feel the joy and pleasure of everyday life. Many drug abusers feel depressed or flat when they are not taking drugs and need to take drugs to get their dopamine levels back to normal.

Not everyone who uses alcohol or drugs is an addict or substance abuser. A person becomes a substance abuser when the substance becomes so crucial that he or she is willing to risk other important aspects of life in order to have the substance. This may be after the first time a substance is used, or it may take years. Examples of this continued use despite negative consequences include using illicit drugs despite a drug-free workplace policy or using someone else's prescription medication for the purposes of becoming impaired, among others.

## How does it affect the workplace?

The following signs and symptoms may (but do not necessarily) indicate possible substance abuse:

### Performance

- Inconsistent work quality;
- Poor concentration;
- Lowered productivity;
- Increased absenteeism;
- Unexplained disappearances from the jobsite;
- Carelessness, mistakes;
- Errors in judgment;
- Needless risk taking;
- Disregard for safety; and
- Extended lunch periods and early departures.

### Behavior

- Frequent financial problems;
- Avoidance of friends and colleagues;
- Blaming others for own problems and shortcomings;
- Complaints about problems at home;
- Deterioration in personal appearance; and
- Complaints and excuses of vaguely defined illnesses.



# The Facts

At Solace, we treat the ramifications of addiction and treat it as an illness and not as a moral dilemma.

## A deeper look at Addiction:



A person becomes addicted once he or she is psychologically or physically dependent on a substance. Psychological dependence means that an individual believes that he or she cannot function in social, work or other settings without being intoxicated in some way.

Physical dependence, on the other hand, includes one or both of the following experiences over time:

- o **Tolerance:** A need for increased amounts of a substance to achieve intoxication.
- o **Withdrawal:** Symptoms such as nausea, chills, and/or vomiting upon discontinuing use of the substance.

### Addiction to alcohol or other drugs may be:

- o **Chronic**—Once an addiction is developed, it will always be a condition that requires management. For the large majority of people, it is not possible to use the substance again in the future without further negative consequences.
- o **Progressive**—Addiction gets worse over time.
- o **Primary**—Addiction is not just a symptom of an underlying psychological problem. Once the use of alcohol or drugs becomes an addiction, the addiction itself needs to be treated as the primary illness.
- o **Fatal**—Addiction to alcohol or other drugs often leads to death through damage to major organs of the body.

### Prescription Drugs:

When drugs are taken as prescribed for medical reasons, they can be very effective. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of people who abuse prescription drugs.

It is also important that employers understand the risk of addiction for patients who have been prescribed certain prescription drugs, particularly pain medication. It is therefore important that physicians make every effort to control indiscriminate prescribing, even when they are under pressure.



NAME	TYPE	EXAMPLE SIDE EFFECTS	POTENTIAL NEGATIVE OR LONG-TERM EFFECTS
<b>Opioids</b>	Narcotic	Drowsiness, constipation, lack of pain perception	Respiratory depression, death
<b>CNS Depressants</b>	Depressant	Sleepiness, lack of coordination	Seizures
<b>Prescription Stimulants</b>	Stimulant	Elevated blood pressure/heart rate, sleep deprivation	Cardiovascular problems, seizures
<b>Cocaine</b>	Stimulant	Increased sensation, euphoria, elevated heart rate	Cardiovascular problems, seizures
<b>Heroin</b>	Narcotic	Euphoria, flushed skin, dry mouth	Sudden death, pulmonary problems
<b>LSD</b>	Hallucinogen	Delusions, hallucinations, elevated heart rate	Psychoses, flashbacks, depression
<b>Marijuana</b>	Cannabis	Euphoria, sleepiness, hunger, thirst, panic	Respiratory problems, memory damage
<b>MDMA (Ecstasy)</b>	Hallucinogen	Muscle tension, teeth clenching, blurred vision, nausea	Damage to mood, thinking, judgment
<b>Methamphetamine</b>	Stimulant	Elevated body temperature, convulsions	Psychoses, suicidality, paranoia
<b>Alcohol</b>	Depressant	Slurred speech, blurred vision, impaired memory	Liver disease, brain damage, mood disorders

# What we can do

Together with Solace Sabah,  
Employers can give the best choice  
possible for their employees health.



## In Conclusion;



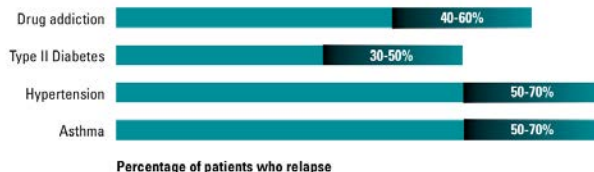
Group Session  
at Solace

### “Worker Substance Abuse Brings High Costs to Employers”

Reducing employee substance abuse can help employers decrease health care costs, reduce workplace injuries and improve productivity. Practical solutions for preventing and addressing substance abuse are available with the Solace . There is a growing understanding that substance addictions are chronic conditions— not unlike asthma, diabetes or hypertension.

Similar to these chronic diseases, substance addiction can be managed successfully. As with other chronic diseases, it is not uncommon for a person to relapse—in this case, to begin abusing substances again. Relapse, however, does not mean failure—rather, it indicates that treatment should be reinstated or adjusted, or that alternate treatment is needed.

#### Relapse Rates Are Similar for Addiction and Other Chronic Illnesses



## How do we identify Addiction at work?

As with other health conditions, identifying substance abuse early can prevent employees and companies from incurring higher subsequent health and productivity costs. Employer substance abuse benefits and programs may include workplace policies, drug testing, employee education/health promotion, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), and health plan treatment coverage.

At Solace, we provide consultation services to implement the above plans for Addiction Identification. Furthermore, Employers can implement a drug-free workplace initiative with written substance abuse policies.

- o Purpose and objectives of the program.
- o Definition of substance abuse.
- o Who is covered by the policy and/or program.
- o Under what circumstances will drug or alcohol testing be conducted.



# Our Services

With our comprehensive program and services, any organisation can be fully prepared for taking action.

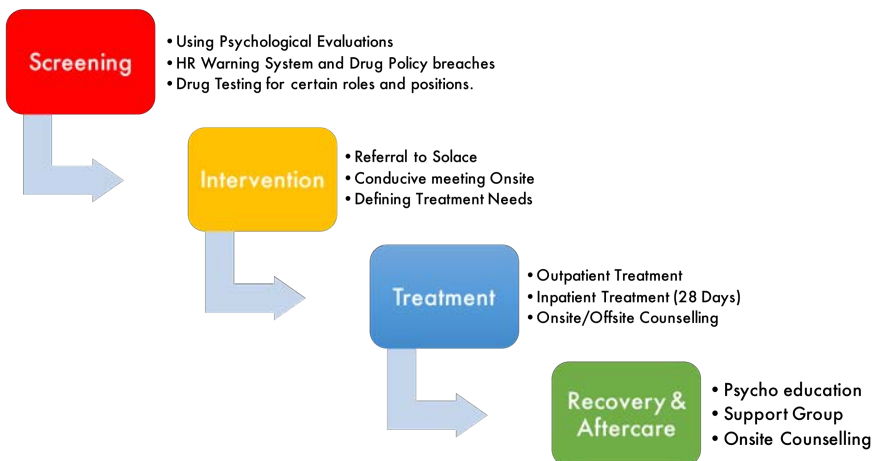
## Services provided by Solace:



According to us, a comprehensive employer substance abuse program should include:

- o A workplace substance abuse education component.
- o Confidential screening for Addictions.
- o Treatment referrals to Outpatient / Inpatient Programs.
- o Confidential follow-up care to support individuals in recovery.
- o Educational opportunities for employees about substance abuse (e.g., a substance-free awareness program).
- o Employee and supervisor training in identifying impaired behavior and other signs of substance abuse.
- o Outline of how to deal with impaired workers.
- o Provisions for assisting chronic substance abusers.
- o Possible disciplinary actions.

At Solace Sabah, we make all of this possible with over 100 years of experience with our clinical staff. Dr Prem Kumar Shanmugam, our founder specializes in developing and evaluating addiction treatment programs. With our skillsets, we pride ourselves in setting up an assistance program for success.



# The Program

With Screening and Assessment, followed by tailored treatment, we ensure success for your employee.



## Screening and Assessment



Outside view  
at Solace

Screening is used to determine whether an individual exhibits key indicators of substance abuse. This process seeks to identify potential or actual substance abusers as early as possible so that appropriate interventions can be provided. Screening can be done in many settings, such as online, in the workplace, at home or in a physician's office. For substance abusers, screening can be the first step to recovery.

The two most widely used self-report screening instruments for alcoholism are the CAGE and the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (MAST). The Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI) is used to identify alcohol and drug abusers and differentiate them from social drinkers and people with other psychiatric issues.

Assessment means a thorough evaluation to definitively establish the presence or absence of a diagnosable substance abuse problem. When substance abuse is present, assessments can also be helpful in determining the most appropriate type of treatment. Structured and semi-structured interviews are used for assessments. The Addiction Severity Index (ASI) is the most widely used measure of problem severity among addicted individuals entering treatment.

## Optimal Treatment Settings and Duration

It is important that addiction be treated as a chronic disorder rather than an acute disease. The typical course of treatment for addiction should include three stages:

- 1) detoxification, a medical procedure to reduce the physical effects of withdrawal from substances.
- 2) acute care, consisting of behavioral and medication-assisted therapies.
- 3) maintenance or continuing care.

	Treatment	For	Treatment Length
Screening	Inpatient Treatment	is recommended for people who have medical issues along with the need for residential treatment. Can be used as a precursor to outpatient	3-7 Days
	Residential Treatment	is generally recommended for people who do not have medical issues that require hospitalization but who need strong support to remain abstinent.	28 Days*
	Partial Hospitalization and Brief Therapy	is appropriate for people who need intensive care but are likely to be able to refrain from substance use when in a less restricted setting.	3-7 Days Hospitalisation with 2-6 sessions weekly with Counsellor.
	Outpatient Treatment	recommended for persons who do not require more intensive levels of care.	2-6 Brief Therapy Sessions a week.



# The Program

With Screening and Assessment, followed by tailored treatment, we ensure success for your employee.



## Brief Therapies:



Brief therapies are geared to providing patients with the tools to change their attitude toward themselves and their use of substances. Research shows that brief counseling for alcohol abusers leads to reduced alcohol consumption and reductions in adverse alcohol-related health outcomes.

These therapies use the same techniques as long-term therapy, but are of shorter duration and lower cost, lasting typically between 6 and 20 sessions. Screening and counseling for alcohol misuse reduces both health care costs and costs to society.

Brief therapies are the most effective for individuals who have:

- o Support from other employee programs such as health insurance;
- o Strong family, work and community ties;
- o Substance use problems of short duration;
- o Desire to minimize disruption of work and family life;
- o Strong motivation to change; and
- o Confidence that their therapy will reduce their substance use.

## Recovery:

Individuals who have participated in and finished treatment programs are considered to be “in recovery.” Recovery is “an ongoing process of improvement—biologically, psychologically, socially and spiritually while attempting to maintain abstinence from alcohol and other drugs.” There are six stages that individuals must go through for long-term recovery:

**Transition**—The period of time needed for individuals to realize that safe use of alcohol or other drugs is not possible for them.

**Stabilization**—The period of time in which the individual experiences physical withdrawal and other medical problems and learns how to separate himself or herself from the people, places and things that promote drug abuse.

**Early recovery**—The period of time in which an individual faces the need to establish a substance-free lifestyle and build relationships that support long-term recovery.

**Middle recovery**—The period of time for developing a balanced lifestyle where repairing past damage is critical.

**Late recovery**—The period of time when the individual identifies and changes mistaken beliefs (about himself or herself, others, and the world) that cause or promote irrational thinking.

**Maintenance**—The lifelong process of continued growth, development and management of routine life problems.



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