



BECOMING A RECOVERY-READY WORKPLACE



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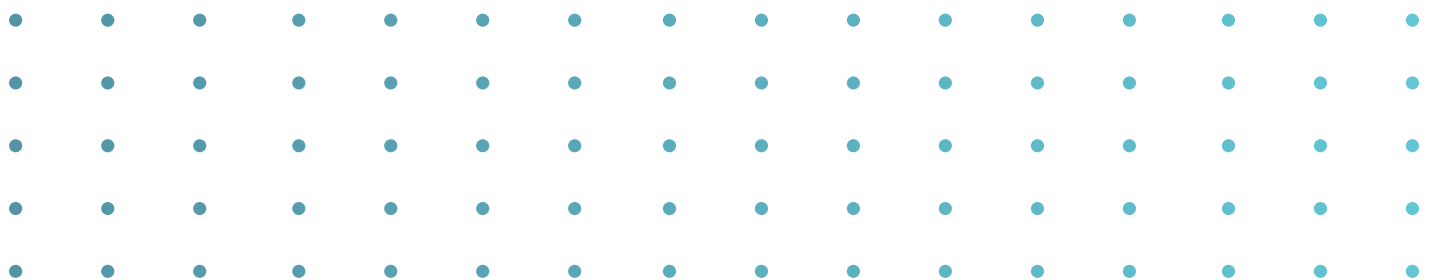


The Health Action Alliance is a unique collaboration between leading business, communications and public health organizations to help employers navigate evolving health challenges, improve the health of workers and engage with public health partners to build stronger, healthier communities.

Learn more at healthaction.org.

This resource was developed by the Health Action Alliance in partnership with the Ad Council, Huntsman Mental Health Institute and National Safety Council.

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EDITORIAL NOTE: The Health Action Alliance is solely responsible for the content of this toolkit and maintains full editorial control of its resources.

The Crisis: The Impact of Substance Use Disorder and Addiction on the American Workplace

The statistics are telling: **One in eleven** full-time employees has a substance use disorder (SUD). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, employees with substance abuse challenges take almost 50% more unscheduled days off, and their turnover rate is 44% higher than other workers. Once those workers who are in recovery, those statistics shift dramatically. Employees in recovery take nearly 10% fewer unscheduled days off than other workers and their turnover rate is 12% lower.

Post-Pandemic Surge

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many challenges in the workplace. Statistics show a significant **rise** in substance use within the U.S. following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even more troubling is how few employees seek help due to the stigma surrounding SUD and addiction.

It's important to understand that an employee might hesitate to submit paperwork related to Family and Medical Leave. Instead, they may be silent, afraid of retaliation, or viewed as an unfit contributor to their department if they are open about their addiction. As author Brene Brown has said, "Shame erodes our courage and fuels disengagement."



The Cost of Addiction for Businesses

Saddled with the emotional and mental toll SUD can take on the workforce, it also creates a significant financial burden for employers.

These costs are driven by a variety of factors, including:

- Higher absenteeism rates
- Employee turnover
- Decreased productivity
- Increased risk of workplace accidents
- Elevated disability and workers' compensation costs

The **economic cost** of substance use disorders in the United States is staggering, estimated at \$3.73 trillion annually. The cost to your business is real. Take a moment to estimate the cost of substance use disorder on your business using [this calculator](#).

A Call to Action for Business Leaders

Creating a recovery-ready workplace is not just important to maintain high-level productivity; businesses need to demonstrate empathy by openly supporting their recovering employees and their families.

This resource is designed to provide business leaders who want to cultivate recovery-ready workplaces with actionable steps to ensure a safe, healthy work environment for employees and their families facing substance use disorder.



INSIDE:

- **What are Recovery-Ready Workplaces?**
- **Why You Should Create a Recovery-Ready Workplace**
- **Become a Champion for Recovery-Ready Workplaces**
- **Tips to Get Started**

What are Recovery-Ready Workplaces?

A recovery-ready environment provides support, resources and policies to assist employees struggling with or recovering from a substance use disorder. Raising awareness about SUD and reducing the stigma associated with substance use and misuse are also foundational to developing these nurturing workplaces.

Recovery-ready workplaces establish and implement policies that:

-  Encourage employees with substance use disorder to seek help.
-  Provide access to resources for treatment services and support.
-  Create job opportunities for those in recovery.
-  Inform employees in recovery of their legal rights regarding treatment.
-  Educate staff about addiction and recovery, including prevention and early intervention measures to reduce stigma.
-  Ensure that prospective and current employees are well-informed about policies and procedures related to treatment and recovery.



Why Should Your Workplace be Recovery-Ready?

Facts You Can Share

10%

The crisis is damaging and often unseen: studies show that approximately **10%** of people who need addiction treatment receive it. Employers have a responsibility to provide options and opportunities for effective treatment to their employees.



Overdoses are the **#1 cause of accidental death** in the U.S., surpassing car accidents and gun violence.



Odds are someone on your team is already dealing with addiction, either directly or indirectly.



Studies show that Gen Z is drinking less and prioritizing mental and physical health, in contrast to Millennials during a similar life stage.



The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence reports that more than two-thirds of people abusing illicit drugs are also employed, most of whom are also binge drinkers.



Forward-thinking employers will seize this opportunity to create proactive, educational, recovery-ready workplaces.

Recovery-Ready Workplaces Boost Both Morale and the Bottom Line

Fostering an empathetic and resourceful workplace for employees affected by SUD can lead to several direct benefits, such as:

1. Improved collaboration and

inclusivity. Embrace inclusivity by diversifying social activities and rituals to accommodate those in their recovery process.

Employers should recognize how the ubiquity of alcohol manifests in the workplace. Studies show that when excluded from **social rituals** due to their abstinence from alcohol, for example, staff are denied the opportunity to collaborate, establish connections and tap into their creative potential with others.

2. Increased resiliency and productivity across the workforce.

Employment itself plays a crucial role in SUD recovery. Supporting employees in recovery enhances their involvement, increasing your company's resilience and profitability.

3. Employee loyalty and retention.

People suffering from SUD or navigating recovery often feel significant guilt, shame and regret. Empathetic support motivates individuals in recovery. Creating an environment surrounded with positive work conditions leads to positive emotions and a more constructive view of the employer. These workers may just become your most dependable and **resilient employees**.



Case Study

Amazon employee launched Recovery@Amazon

Amazon offers a resource group for employees suffering from addiction or are in recovery. The group provides a space for all Amazon employees battling different kinds of addiction—whether it's drugs, alcohol, shopping, gambling, or anything else - hosts an internal site for resources, and Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings on a regular basis.



Case Study

Salesforce VP created Soberforce

Soberforce is a virtual space where Salesforce employees can gather to support each other and safely have transparent conversations about sobriety with coworkers. This online community has grown to over 400 members globally in the past three years. They hold virtual meetings and have their own Slack channel.

Become an Advocate for Recovery-Ready Workplaces

If you want to demonstrate your commitment to workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion, a recovery-ready work atmosphere will reflect your organization’s commitment to critical values and principles:



Employee wellness



Family support



Corporate responsibility

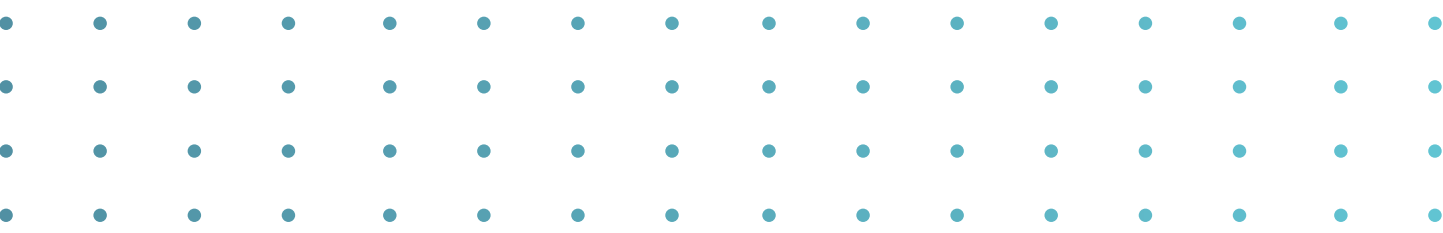


Legal compliance



Attracting and retaining quality talent

Relying on media portrayals of addiction and drug use is not an effective educational resource. Employers must be informed about the effects of substance use disorder and addiction in the workplace.



Go Deeper: Additional Resources From Our Partners



Their [Employee Resources](#) provide a handful of examples, tools and information to help employers support their employees.



Their [Recovery-Ready Workplace Toolkit](#) aims to help executives and managers leverage their resources to support an inclusive and stigma-free atmosphere for employees seeking help with SUD.



Educate Yourself on Substance Use Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery

- Research credible sources to learn about addiction, treatment, and recovery.
- Invest in training sessions and workshops for HR leaders and managers on SUD and similar conditions.
- Review and update company policies and legal requirements.
- Consult with experts in the field and apply their suggestions to training/workshops.

Get Started in Your Workplace:

- Launch awareness campaigns to educate employees and reduce stigma by initiating the conversation.
- Evaluate new policies and procedures for training and support.
- Gather employee feedback to best meet the needs of your workforce.
- Give your employees the freedom to organize an Employee Resource Group around sobriety and recovery
- Train frontline managers and supervisors on how to support employees seeking help, and train them to reinforce available SUD resources in their companies.

Self-Education is a Step You Can't Skip

The more you do the work personally to understand your biases about addiction, the better you can advocate for a recovery-ready workplace.

- Challenge stereotypes about people who struggle with addiction. Reconsider any outdated prejudices or biases you may have on their class status or physical condition.
- Recognize that addiction affects people from every socioeconomic demographic, race, and gender.
- Understand addiction is not a choice, a moral failing, or a lack of willpower; it is a medical condition that affects the structure and function of the brain.
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to treatment and recovery.

Develop SUD-informed policies, foster a culture of support, and empower employees to identify **signs** of substance abuse. What are those signals?

- Physical signs may include bloodshot eyes, slurred speech, and impaired coordination.
- Psychological signs may include sudden mood swings, unexplained changes in personality or attitude, and extreme fatigue.
- Behavioral changes may include neglecting responsibilities at work, increased risky behaviors like driving while intoxicated, or anxiety over sudden legal issues.

Making the Case: Talking Points for Recovery-Ready Workplace Advocates

- **Financial impacts:** Improves productivity, reduces turnover, and reduces healthcare costs.
- **Employee support:** Promotes the health and wellbeing of your employees and their families.
- **Impacts all industries and departments:** Addiction afflicts employees in all fields and departments, from factories to remote workers to marketing offices to HR to the C-suite.
- **Simple, practical steps can make a big difference:** Providing education and tangible resources are the first steps to reducing stigma and promoting transparency around addiction.
- **Developing stronger equity (and legal) commitments:** Recovery-ready workplaces demonstrate your commitment to equity protocols and compliance with legal obligations.

Getting Started With Open Feedback and Communication

Fostering a supportive and helpful workplace culture shouldn't be overwhelming to assist those managing SUD. Developing this work environment simply takes the time and energy to engage in actions and conversations leading to a sustainable recovery-ready workplace.

Below are four tips to get the ball moving in the right direction:



Conduct anonymous surveys to gather honest employee feedback and insight from those willing to share their experiences.



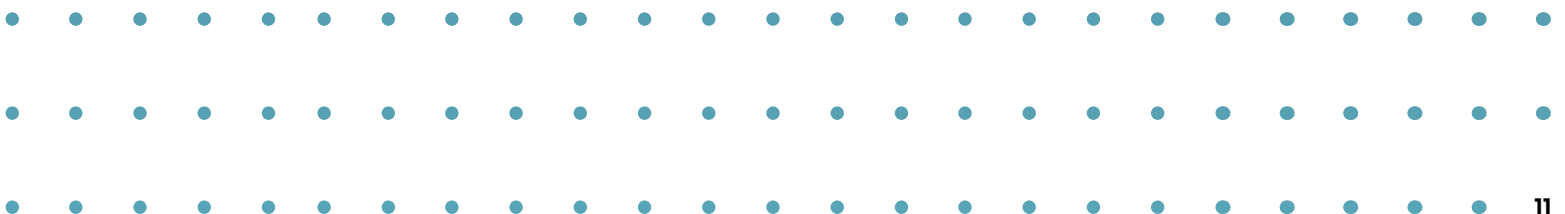
Consult with experts in the field, such as addiction specialists, mental health therapists, treatment center directors, and peer support groups.



Revisit HR policies and procedures around onboarding new hires to include accessible resources. Those tools may be **addiction hotlines**, broadened mental health benefits, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), and regular follow-ups to evaluate the program's effectiveness.



Reduce stigma. Use **person-first language** in the workplace. Instead of labeling someone as an "addict" or "alcoholic," describe them as individuals with a substance use disorder. Also, refrain from using the word "clean" to refer to someone in recovery; the opposite of "clean" is "dirty" and that kind of language can be demeaning and harmful.



Communication Guidelines:

SUD-Informed Policy and Practice

Creating policies and taking action to address addiction in the workplace is a legal responsibility of employers. What that means is taking concrete steps towards those goals:

1. Establish well-defined reporting channels for addressing and escalating concerns and resolutions related to SUD. Provide an open-door policy for discussing concerns related to recovery without fear of repercussions.
2. Communicate this chain of command to all employees.
3. Make sure confidential resources, such as a digital library with information for individuals and families, are accessible.
4. **Modify hiring procedures** to be more inclusive of individuals in recovery. Consider focusing on experience rather than timelines when evaluating resumes.
5. Educate employees about their legal protections under the **Affordable Care Act (ACA)** and the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**.
6. Maintain ongoing communication with employees in treatment and demonstrate continued support to reinforce the company's commitment to employee recovery.
7. Communicate clear return-to-work policies.
8. Be clear about the availability of ongoing support and resources for relapse prevention for current employees. These resources may include memberships to wellness/therapy websites.
9. Reduce stigma by normalizing recovery and reducing the fear of seeking help.
10. Keep accurate records of discussions, actions taken, and the types of support provided to track progress and ensure consistency.

The urgent need for recovery-ready workplaces is clear. Federal and state laws protect individuals with substance use disorders from discrimination, and now more than ever, employers must step up to uphold these protections.

Employees want to be aligned with companies that reflect their values and respect their well-being.

By facilitating a recovery-ready workplace, you demonstrate that you are willing to take tangible actions to support commitments to diversity and inclusion.



LET US BE YOUR TRUSTED GUIDE.

Shatterproof guides society through the complexities of substance use disorder by providing science-based information and resources. We inform the public on prevention, treatment, and recovery from addiction and mobilize communities to take action.

Employers can rely on Shatterproof for helpful tools such as:

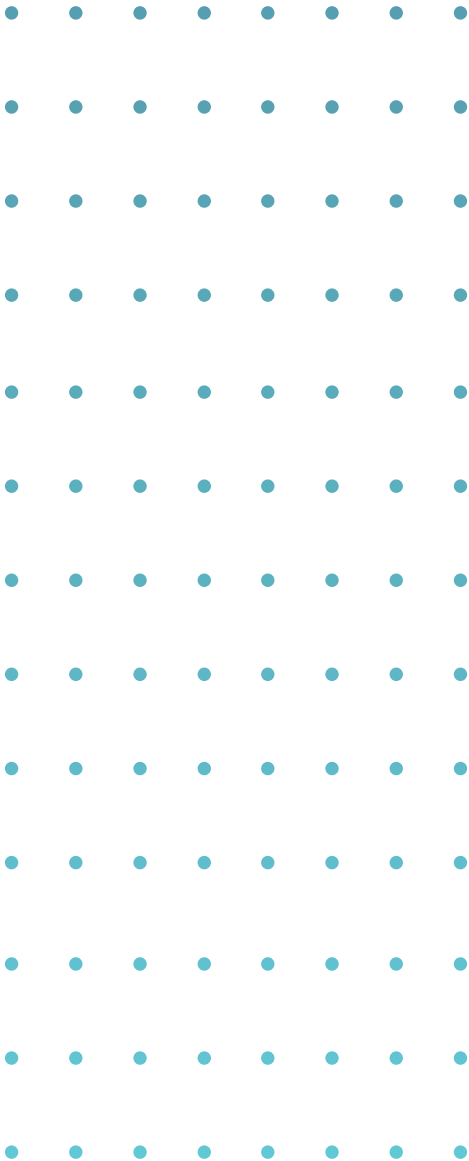
Shatterproof **Just Five** is an online educational program focused on increasing awareness, reducing stigma, and sharing information about addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery.

Shatterproof **Treatment Atlas** is a free and confidential resource to help people find quality addiction treatment that will meet their needs.



 Join Shatterproof to open hearts and minds and ensure everyone can have a strong recovery.

 Learn more at www.Shatterproof.org



If we’re going to end the current addiction and overdose crisis, we must treat combating stigma as no less important than developing and implementing new prevention and treatment tools.

Nora Volkow
Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

DISCLAIMER: Public health guidance on workplace mental health is evolving. Health Action Alliance is committed to regularly updating our materials once we have engaged public health, business and communications experts about the implications of new guidance from the mental health community and effective business strategies that align with public health goals.

This Guide provides an overview of workplace mental health issues, and is not intended to be, and should not be construed as, legal, business, medical, scientific or any other advice for any particular situation. The content included herein is provided for informational purposes only and may not reflect the most current developments as the subject matter is extremely fluid.

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