

September 2009

Drug-Free Workplace: Cost-Effective Ways To Help Employees

Do you have employees with substance abuse problems? Want to help them, but don't think you have the financial resources and aren't sure where to start? SAMHSA is here to help.

Fourteen two-page informational briefs are now available for employers. They outline the benefits—including financial—of helping employees receive treatment for substance abuse.

“These timely materials show that substance abuse treatment benefits under employee health

plans can actually save them money while boosting employees' health and productivity,” said H. Westley Clark, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Director of SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

“This can help employers make informed decisions while they are considering changes related to the Wellstone/Domenici Mental Health and Addictions Parity Act of 2008,” Dr. Clark added. For information on parity, see [SAMHSA News online, November/December 2008](#).

Briefs at a Glance: Cost Savers, Resources

The briefs include quick facts, definitions, and helpful links.

Find out what you can do to help your employees. Available briefs include:

- [Save Your Company Money By Assuring Access to Substance Abuse Treatment](#)
- [What You Need To Know About Older Workers and Substance Abuse](#)
- [What You Need To Know About Younger Workers and Substance Abuse](#)
- [What You Need To Know About Mental and Substance Use Disorders](#)
- [Save Money By Addressing Employee Alcohol Problems](#)
- [Save Money By Addressing Employee Drug Problems](#)
- [What You Need To Know About the Cost of Substance Abuse](#)
- [Save Money By Encouraging Workers To Get Help For Substance Use Problems](#)
- [An EAP that Addresses Substance Abuse Can Save You Money](#)
- [How You Can Support Workers in Recovery](#)
- [Resources Available to Employers](#)
- [What You Need to Know About Substance Abuse Treatment](#)
- [Save by Providing Comprehensive Benefits for Substance Abuse Treatment](#)
- [You Save When Your Health Plans Improve Substance Abuse Screening](#)

These briefs are bundled together for your convenience. Order a bundled set from SAMHSA's Health Information Network by calling 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727).

Driving Defensively

More than 41,000 people lose their lives in motor vehicle crashes each year and over 2.4 million more suffer disabling injuries, according to the National Safety Council. The quadruple threat of distractions, high speeds, impaired or careless driving and not using occupant restraints threatens every driver—regardless of how careful or how skilled.

Driving defensively means not only taking responsibility for yourself and your actions but also keeping an eye on "the other guy." The National Safety Council suggests the following guidelines to help reduce your risks on the road.

- Don't start the engine without securing each passenger in the car, including children and pets. Safety belts save thousands of lives each year! Lock all doors.
- Remember that driving too fast or too slow can increase the likelihood of collisions.
- Don't kid yourself. If you plan to drink, designate a driver who won't drink. Alcohol is a factor in over 40 percent of all fatal motor vehicle crashes.
- Do not use cell phones (including hands free) or any other mobile electronic devices while operating a motor vehicle. This includes, but is not limited to, answering or making phone calls, engaging in phone conversations, reading or responding to e-mails and text messages, adjusting a Global Positioning System (GPS) and accessing the internet.
- Be alert! If you notice that a car is straddling the center line, weaving, making wide turns, stopping abruptly or responding slowly to traffic signals, the driver may be impaired.
- Avoid an impaired driver by turning right at the nearest corner or exiting at the nearest exit. If it appears that an oncoming car is crossing into your lane, pull over to the roadside, sound the horn and flash your lights.
- Notify the police immediately after seeing a motorist who is driving suspiciously.
- Follow the rules of the road. Don't contest the "right of way" or try to race another car during a merge. Be respectful of other motorists.
- Don't follow too closely. Always use a "three-second following distance" or a "three-second plus following distance."

Analysis Identifies Effective College Drinking Interventions

Internet and face-to-face individuals counseling were most effective in curbing college drinking, whereas mail and group feedback did little to change drinking habits, according to a systematic review of previously published research on college alcohol use.

[HealthDay News](#) reported July 20 that researchers from Oxford Brookes University in England reviewed 22 past studies and found that 62 percent of students receiving Internet-based interventions reported reductions in their drinking, as did 65 percent of students who received in-person, one-on-one counseling.

The researchers expressed support for social-norms prevention focused on perception of alco-

hol consumption, saying that students might drink less if they knew that their friends weren't drinking as much as they did. However, one expert also expressed surprise that group interventions were found to be ineffective.

"By providing normative information to a group, I would have expected that it would provide a level of social support for refusal," said Jeanie Alter, program manager and lead evaluator of the Indiana Prevention Resource Center at Indiana University's School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. "A similarly minded group usually would back you up in your decision not to use."

The review was published in the June 19, 2009 issue of the [Cochrane Library](#).

SAFETY FACTS: MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT PREVENTION

From: New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death at work in New Mexico. Motor vehicle accidents tend to result in more serious injuries than other types of accidents – almost 30 percent of all compensable fatalities are this type.

CAUSES

- Failure to wear seat belts
- Lack of attention while driving
- Excessive speed
- Violations of state law and company policy
- Driving under the influence
- Failure to drive with regard to road conditions



IDEAS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Develop a company policy that covers driving while at work.
- Consider including the following:
 - The use of seat belts in company vehicles is mandatory
 - Only specifically authorized employees with valid and company verified licenses may operate company vehicles or personally owned vehicles on company business
 - Prohibit alcohol and drug use in company vehicles
 - Offer Defensive Driving courses to employees
 - Develop a vehicle safety inspection and maintenance program
 - Establish a safety awards program to recognize good drivers

IDEAS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Wear seat belts and ensure your passengers do the same
- Never drink and drive
- Obey all traffic laws
- Inspect your vehicle before driving and report defects to a supervisor
- Do not drive the vehicle if safety problems are not corrected
- Be alert to changing road conditions and drive defensively



Hor rific Van Crash Highlights Disturbing Trend in Female DUIs

Women in the U.S. are drinking and driving drunk more, experts point out in the wake of a drunk-driving crash in upstate New York where a mother and seven others died.

The [Associated Press](#) reported Aug. 6 that while most drunk drivers are men, DUI arrests among women rose 28.8 percent between 1998 and 2007, while such arrests declined 7.5 percent among men.

Some of the rise in arrests of women could be attributed to police being less inclined to look the other way when females are pulled over. But Chuck Hurley, CEO of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, said, "Women are picking up some of the dangerously bad habits of men," and Chris Cochran of the California Office of Traffic Safety added: "Younger women feel more empowered, more equal to men, and have been beginning to exhibit the same uninhibited behaviors as men."

In the New York case, driver Diane Schuler was legally drunk and had marijuana in her system when her van plowed head-on into another car while driving the wrong way on the Taconic Parkway. The victims included Schuler, her two-year-old daughter, three nieces, and three men in the car she struck.

"We realized for the last two to three years, the pattern of more female drivers, particularly mothers with kids in their cars, getting arrested for drunk driving," said Tom Meier, director of Drug Prevention and Stop DWI for Westchester County, where the crash occurred. "Drunk drivers often carry their kids with them," said Hurley of MADD. "It's the ultimate form of child abuse." This year, the U.S. Transportation Department's annual crackdown on drunk driving will focus on women. "There's the impression out there that drunk driving is strictly a male issue, and it is certainly not the case," said Rae Tyson of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "There are a number of parts of the country where, in fact, the majority of impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes are female."

DRUGS IN THE WORKPLACE

What an employer needs to know.

Substance abuse is a widespread problem in our society. An estimated 14.8 million Americans are current illicit drug users.¹ The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reported that 77 percent of illicit drug users in the United States are employed. That's 9.4 million people. The chances are good that your organization employs one of these workers.

Who is using drugs at work?

A survey by the federal government showed full-time employees who admitted to being current illicit drug users tend to be:

- between the ages of 18 and 25
- less educated
- male
- divorced or never married
- White
- Low paid

Industries with the highest rates of illicit drug use

- food preparation workers
- waiters, waitresses, and bartenders
- other service occupation workers
- construction workers
- Workers in transportation and material moving

How does substance abuse impact the workplace?

Employees who abuse alcohol and other drugs bring their problems with them to work.

Substance abuse lowers productivity.

- Problems related to alcohol and drug abuse cost American businesses roughly \$81 billion in lost productivity in just one year.
- Studies have shown that substance-abusing employees function at 67% of their capacity

Substance abuse causes accidents and injuries.

- Up to 40 percent of industrial fatalities and 47 percent of industrial injuries can be linked to alcohol use and alcoholism.
- Employees who use drugs are 3.6 more times likely to be involved in a

workplace accident and 5 times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim.

Substance abuse increases absenteeism and turnover.

- An estimated 500 million workdays are lost annually due to alcoholism.
 - Employees who use drugs are 2.2 times more likely to request early dismissal or time off, 2.5 times more likely to have absences of eight days or more, and 3 times more likely to be late for work.
 - Illicit drug users are more than twice as likely than those who do not use drugs to have changed employers three or more times in the past year.
- ### Substance abuse increases an employer's medical costs.
- Employees who use drugs cost their employers about twice as much in medical claims as do non-drug-using

What can your organization do to decrease the impact of substance abuse?

Implement a drug-free workplace program

In 1988, the Drug-free Workplace Act was passed, requiring all federal grantees and some recipients of federal contracts to agree to provide a drug-free workplace as a condition of receiving federal money. In a drug-free workplace, all employees adhere to a program of policies and activities designed to provide a safe Workplace.¹² The policies and activities discourage alcohol and drug abuse and encourage treatment, recovery and the return to work of those employees who have abuse problems.¹³ Even if your organization is not required to have a drug-free workplace program, your organization can still benefit.

A successful drug-free workplace program may include:

- a written policy
- employee education
- supervisor training
- access to assistance
- drug testing

A good drug-free workplace program can lead to

Decreases in:

- absenteeism
- accidents
- downtime
- turnover
- workers' compensation costs
- employee discipline problems

Increases in:

- productivity
- profits
- customer satisfaction
- health status
- employee morale

Resources for Employer's – Help with Drug Free Workplace

- <http://www.dwiresourcecenter.org/bizcenter/dfwp.shtml>
- <http://alcoholcostcalculator.org/>
- <http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov/HelpLine/HelpLine.aspx>