



LifeSolutions

Substance Use Awareness

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER (SUD) WAS FIRST CATEGORIZED AS A DISEASE BY THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION IN THE 1960s. TO THIS DAY, THE CONDITION CARRIES A NEGATIVE CONNOTATION, AND THIS STIGMA COULD LEAD YOUR EMPLOYEES WHO MAY BE STRUGGLING WITH THE DISORDER TO HIDE THEIR CONDITION.

Substance abuse doesn't discriminate—no one is exempt from the risks that come with misusing drugs, medications, and alcohol. However, some people may be at greater risk than others. Those coping with chronic stress may use substances to calm down, while others dealing with injury or illness might abuse their prescribed medications. Someone who previously drank alcohol to relax might become more and more dependent.

Substance use can compromise the safety of your employees, and it costs businesses billions of dollars each year in lost productivity, turnover, and health care expenses. Substance abusers often show similar symptoms, and learning what those symptoms are may allow you to intervene and get your employees the help they need. Signs of an SUD can include:

- Frequent or prolonged absences from work, often without notice
- Missed appointments, meetings, and deadlines without good explanations
- An unusual number of mistakes caused by inattention, poor judgment, or bad decisions

- Routine tasks requiring more time and effort than they should
- Confusion and memory loss
- Difficulty concentrating or recalling details and instructions
- More frequent emotional flare-ups and arguments
- Unexplained deterioration in personal appearance and hygiene
- Personality changes like mood swings, anxiety, depression, or strange outbursts
- Co-workers commenting on or complaining about the person's attitude and behavior

If an employee's condition reaches a point where you need to share your concerns, it's important to state facts, not opinions. For example, "When you arrived today, you smelled like alcohol, and your speech was slurred."

If the discussion makes your employee upset, it's important that you remain calm, acknowledge the discomfort of the situation, and reassure them that their welfare is your most important consideration. Make sure the meeting ends with your employee knowing that you support them.

LifeSolutions' employee assistance program services are private and confidential. They are available to you and members of your household at no cost.

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This information is not a substitute for professional care or your organization's policies. If you have or suspect you have an issue related to the material presented here, consult an appropriate professional.

If an employee has a substance use disorder, they can call LifeSolutions at 1-800-647-3327. You can also recommend that your employee use the RxWell app for relief from anxiety or stress that may come with substance use (available on the Apple App Store and Google Play). This interactive app teaches users techniques that can calm their mind and challenge old patterns of thinking.

LifeSolutions is here to help.

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1-800-647-3327 (TTY: 711)

To access the Work-Life section of our website, go to www.lifesolutionsforyou.com, click Login, and enter your company code: UPMC.

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