



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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Supporting Recovery for Substance Use in the Workplace: Fostering Resilience

By Julee Clark, MA, LMFT

If you become aware that an employee is struggling with alcohol or substance use issues, it can be a tense and uncomfortable time for everyone. Addiction affects millions of people in all levels of employment, education, and financial status. It often disrupts employee work performance and dependability, and impacts personal lives.

Grief and loss, relationship turmoil, parenting stress, financial pressures, social unrest, chronic pain and health crisis, are just some of the issues that often trigger increases in substance abuse patterns.

Chemical dependency is a topic that can often be difficult to navigate. Bound by their policies and procedures, supervisors often want to provide opportunities for support for their staff member's recovery and resilience at work.

Retaining staff is more likely when employees have a chance to recover and get the help they need. EAP clinicians can consult with supervisors and provide guidance in their decision making process as they try to support their employees. Whether there are current disciplinary concerns at work, or an employee voluntarily admits they want help, there are many paths to health and recovery.

The EAP will guide anyone who reaches out toward the appropriate steps for substance use support. There are varying possible paths for being assessed and subsequent possible treatment plan options.

Possible Paths and Treatment Plan Options

1. Formal Evaluation

The evaluation is a tool which will help assess the severity of a possible substance abuse problem, and guide the provider in creating a customized treatment plan if warranted. They are conducted by substance use professionals with specialized training; and are most often conducted in treatment program locations. Appointments are made in advance and usually take 1-2 hours.

Assessments are confidential and voluntary. No information is released or reported without the client giving signed consent. Clients freely decide whether or not to enroll in treatment programs, unless they are court ordered or employer required for work policies. Ultimately, it is still up to the client to make the decision whether or not to follow through.

2. Types of Treatment Options

- **Outpatient** treatment is one of the most common recommendations. Employees typically continue to work while attending morning or evening treatment groups over several months. The weekly frequency and the length of the course of treatment depends on the individual needs, progress and care plan.
- **Inpatient** treatment is recommended for the most critical and intensive needs. Someone may have had several relapses and inpatient care is the safest and most effective plan with medical supervision. Additional health complications can also be easily monitored with inpatient care. Patients live on site

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at the residential facility for 14-30 days typically, sometimes longer. Employees make the appropriate arrangements with their supervisors for time away.

- **Medical detox programs** are also inpatient and may be necessary if someone is experiencing severe withdrawal symptoms such as: tremors, nausea, vomiting, sweats, anxiety or rapid heart rate. When physical withdrawal symptoms are present and medical detox is warranted, treatment can be overseen and monitored safely. Acute withdrawal symptoms can have dangerous health risks. Inpatient detox programs usually take between 3-7 days before formal treatment begins.
- **ADIS (alcohol drug information school)** class hours may be recommended, if no addiction or treatment criteria is met after the evaluation. This is an 8-16 hour education course that can be done online or in person.

What will it cost?

Medical insurance plans often cover a good portion of evaluation and treatment costs within their network. Individual deductibles and co-payments must be managed by the employee. Education classes and DOT (Department of Transportation) assessments are not covered as a medical expenses.

Guidance from FCH EAP

Supervisors may call the EAP for consultation about current concerns especially if a performance or disciplinary plan is in place; they can also provide the EAP phone number directly to the employee who may confidentially reach out for support. Resources for substance use assessments and treatment will be provided.

Reach FCH EAP 24/7 by calling (800) 777-4114 for consultation. Your clinical team welcomes the opportunity to join you in these critical conversations. You can also visit our website for more information at www.FirstChoiceEAP.com.

About the Author



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Julee has been with First Choice Health since 2011 and manages the FCH EAP Management Referral Program. She has been licensed for over 25 years and has specialties which include: Drug and alcohol addictions; Alzheimer's Disease and dementia care; cancer care and chronic illness; parenting ; transitioning through divorce; and critical incident trauma debriefings.