

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE AWARENESS: INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYERS



Prescription drug overdoses now cause more accidental deaths in the United States than automobile accidents.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that more than 12 million U.S. residents used prescription painkillers nonmedically in the past year. Many nonmedical users of prescription painkillers are employed, and therefore prescription drug use affects employers of all sizes and in all industries.

Why should employers care?

In 2007, prescription narcotic abuse cost employers almost \$26 billion because employees were less productive while at work or were not at work at all.

Employees who abuse drugs are 2 to 5 times more likely to:

- take unexcused absences,
- be late for work,
- quit or be fired within 1 year of employment, be involved in workplace accidents, and
- file workers' compensation claims



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What can employers do?

Educate employees about the health and productivity issues related to prescription drug abuse.

Incorporate information about substance abuse in workplace wellness programs or strategies.

Offer health benefits that provide coverage for substance abuse disorders.

Expand drug testing to include prescription drugs.

Publicize drug-free workplace policies and incorporate guidelines regarding prescription drugs.

Provide employee assistance programs (EAPs), wellness, and work-life programs that include information and services related to substance abuse prevention, treatment, and return to work issues.

Train managers to recognize and respond to substance abuse issues so problems can be addressed in uniform, cost-effective, and business-sensitive ways.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration supports the Preventing Prescription Abuse in the Workplace Technical Assistance Center. For more information, contact PAWTArequest@PIRE.org.

