Supporting Employee Mental Health Substances Use and Intimate Partner Violence
Thank You to Our SAFER Sponsors

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FirstGroup
Today’s Speakers

Rachael Cooper
Senior Program Manager
National Safety Council
Where Are We Now?

• **20.8 million** people in the US are living with a substance use disorder
• Preliminary 2019 data
  • 70,980 total overdose deaths, **50,042 due to opioids**
• COVID-19 → **40 states** have seen significant increases in overdose deaths since March
In The Workplace

- Workplace overdose deaths involving drugs or alcohol have increased annually by at least 25% for five consecutive years
- 95% of opioid ODs occur in working age adults
- 75% of people with a SUD are in the workforce
- Impacts the bottom line, safety and wellbeing of the workplace and workforce
COVID, Substance Use & Mental Health

- Economic vulnerability is associated with increased mental health distress
- Impacts of the pandemic will not disappear quickly
- Impacts of grief and trauma
- Impacts on treatment and recovery
- High levels of stress and poor coping choices
- Fear of attending treatment
- Suspension of programs (varying distancing requirements; financial disruptions)
Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

During late June, 40% of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance use.

- Anxiety/Depression Symptoms: 31%
- Trauma/Stressor-Related Disorder Symptoms: 26%
- Started or Increased Substance Use: 13%
- Seriously Considered Suicide: 11%

For stress and coping strategies: bit.ly/dailylifecoping

*Based on a survey of U.S. adults aged ≥18 years during June 24-30, 2020
†In the 30 days prior to survey
Key Recommendations for Employers

• Obtaining senior leadership engagement and support
• Engaging and educating employees
• Training supervisors on the role they can play
• Encouraging Human Resources to create compassionate, comprehensive policies
Key Recommendations for Employers

• Learning about and addressing unique workplace needs
• Updating employer health care plans and pharmacy benefit programs
• Creating a safe, hazard free workplace
• Developing a workplace culture of health and wellness to reduces stigma and support recovery
In the Time of COVID-19…

- Lead with compassion
- Build resiliency into each and every process; prioritize worker wellbeing
- Break down barriers to care; encourage employees to ask for help when they need it
- How does stress manifest when working remotely?
- Communicate – be open, honest and transparent
- Know your workforce
Today’s Speakers

Susan DeGregorio
Employer Services Coordinator
Standing Firm
Partner Violence: Recognition & Response

Planning for the Next Normal
STANDING FIRM

• A membership organization of employers dedicated to addressing partner violence impact in the workplace.

• Prepare employers to address the **financial, safety and human costs** of partner violence in the workplace.

• Equip employers with the tools necessary to take action.
Planning for the Next Normal

- Workplace Safety/Recall Procedures
- Remote Work
- Employee Benefits/Compensation
- Compliance
- Policy Changes/Business Continuity
- Employee Communications/Training
- Partner Violence
Obstacles to Awareness

It is an important issue but it won’t happen here.
• We don’t look for what we don’t believe is there. The first step to addressing partner violence in the workplace is to acknowledge the issue.
• No workplace is immune.

This is a personal issue.
• Partner violence is a workplace issue, not just a 'personal' issue. Even if the violence occurs away from work, it has significant impacts on the workplace.
• OSHA General Duty Clause.

We are not equipped to address this issue.
• And that’s true, but an employer is not expected to be the expert. It is about being able to respond effectively.
• Recognize, Respond, Refer.
COVID-19 and Partner Violence

• Stay at home is not safe at home.
  — Quarantine, isolation and stressors, such as job loss and financial insecurity increase the risk of partner violence.¹

• Partner violence tends to increase during emergencies and early indicators point towards the same tendency with the COVID-19 pandemic.
  — Compared with 2017-2019, the incidence of physical intimate partner violence in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic is 1.8x higher.²

• 1 in 4 women experience and report severe physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.

• And 1 in 7 men.³

Partner Violence and its Impact

83% of partner violence victims report that the abuse affected their ability to do their job.

Almost 1/2 of victims missed one or more days of work.

Health care costs for physically abused victims are 42% higher than non-victims.

2/3’s of partner violence victims suffer from mental health symptoms.

99% of all partner violence cases include financial abuse.

53% of partner violence victims report losing at least one job because of the violence.

Lacking financial resources is the #1 indicator of whether a victim will stay, leave, or return to an abusive relationship.

Source: Handout available upon request.
Workplace Safety: Onsite

- Almost 30% of workplace violence has roots in partner violence.¹
- As employees in abusive relationships are asked to return to the office or worksite:
  - Returning may be the victim’s first opportunity to escape his or her abuser.
  - The employee’s return to the worksite may represent a loss of control to the abuser acting as a trigger: presenting an elevated concern for risk of violence at the workplace.
  - The perpetrator may prevent the employee from returning to the worksite.

As employers, continue operations and/or bring employees back to the worksite, emphasis should be placed on promoting a culture that emphasizes the overall safety of their employees.

Clearly communicate the organization’s policies and resources for individuals who are victims of partner violence. Creating a culture where disclosure and reporting are encouraged and supported is critical.

Ensure, as applicable, there is a workplace safety plan and/or a personal workplace safety plan for employees who are victims of partner violence who are in or returning to the worksite.

¹ Source: Department of Labor; https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/human-resources-center/policies/workplace-violence-program
Workplace Safety: Remote

• Victims may be experiencing heightened physical and emotional abuse.

• For some, workplaces and schools function as protective environments.
  — The loss of work and school as an escape valve and the increased stress created by job losses, financial setbacks and forced contact can increase the risk of violence and abuse.

• Perpetrators may use restrictions due to COVID-19 to further reduce access to services, help, and psycho-social support from both formal and informal networks.

As an employer you may have the greatest opportunity to help – you have the chance to 'go behind closed doors' and check in with people via a phone or video call.

We build strong and trusted relationships through work. These relationships may be the only connection vulnerable workers have with the outside world, even if limited to video chats, emails, and phone calls.

Employers have access to workplace resources and accommodations which can alleviate pressure around work responsibilities and arrangements which may be contributing to heightened risks for the victim.
Resources

• COVID-19 Resources

• Manager Training for Remote Workers
  – https://standingfirmswpa.org/covid-19-manager-training/#/

• Resource Kit
  – www.standingfirmswpa.org/resources-for-victims

• Model Policy and/or eLearning Courses (demos)
  – Contact: sdegregorio@standingfirmswpa.org
Reminder

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

• It provides an opportunity for employers to communicate in a broader context.
• Raising awareness is the most important first step to creating a culture where victims are comfortable disclosing.
• STANDING FIRM is available to assist with consultation and collateral.
Mental Health Resources

- Stress and Mental Health Playbook
- Mental Health Issue Brief
- Managing Employee Stress and Anxiety (and accompanying webinar)
- More resources at nsc.org/mentalhealth (includes opioid resources as well)
Opioid Resources

• **Opioids at Work Employer Toolkit**
  • Includes information for leadership, HR, supervisors, communications, and more

• **Substance Use Cost Calculator**
SAFER Reminders

- **Risk Assessment Workshops**
  - Future Dates: September 21, October 6, November 10
- **Organizational Vulnerability Assessment Tool**
- **Employee Perception Surveys**
- **COVID and Technology Webinar Series**
Thank you!
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