

OPIOIDS AT WORK

EMPLOYER TOOLKIT



Case Study: Nationwide Cares

Nationwide, one of America's most diversified financial services companies, established a Substance Use Response Plan that educates leaders and associates, helps keep benefits affordable for Nationwide employees – and most important – continues to keep the Nationwide workplace safer and substance-free.

Since the late 1980s, Nationwide has maintained a substance-free workplace. Their Substance Use Response Plan provides 30,000 associates with comprehensive training, support and education. In 2010, Nationwide health care plans experienced double-digit increases in behavioral health spending, driven largely by inpatient care for substance use.

"Since we've been marketing this resource more heavily, people are coming to us before we are coming to them. They are recognizing through our education efforts that they have a problem," said Kathleen Herath, associate vice president for wellbeing and safety at Nationwide.

The amount spent on behavioral health was minimal compared to overall health plan costs and lower than the financial services industry average, but it prompted Nationwide to find a way to help. Beginning in 2016, the response was a focused effort to educate associates and their families about substance use and misuse, and to enhance existing programs. The Substance Use Response Plan features monthly training to enable leaders to recognize impairment in the workplace.

"The impulse is to overlook someone who is impaired unless they're being disruptive," said Herath. But more and more leaders are coming forward because of the training they've received. It is a practice that has had positive ripple effects. "Some people who were mistakenly seen as impaired had undiagnosed diabetes," she said.

The plan also includes wellness welcome cards and quarterly educational events about addiction for associates, such as a parent's personal story of a child with a substance use disorder, and valuable resources from a clinician. Stories of Hope, a handout developed by Nationwide, combines resource information with testimonials and feedback from associates who participated in substance-free workplace programs because of being impaired at work.





The results have been promising. Since 2015, 95% of associates who were suspected of being impaired at work have agreed to drug testing. Of those who tested positive, 100% agreed to enter treatment. Sixty percent have maintained sobriety throughout the two-year follow-up period, and 100% who successfully completed the two-year program have maintained sobriety. Many former participants have written thank-you notes expressing the crucial difference the program made in their lives. Leaders shared their appreciation for the support and said they acted earlier than they would have otherwise.

Due to these promising outcomes, the Ohio Opioid Education Alliance has requested to share these methods with other employers. All materials are provided at no charge to employers, institutions of higher education, and not-for-profit organizations in order to implement second-chance policies, educate employees and encourage successful treatment.