



Building Employee Buy-In

Employers will be more successful in reducing opioid-related issues if employees actively support a policy – not simply understand and accept it.

When you are ready to unveil a new policy to your employees, consider calling an all-staff meeting and presenting your case using the presentation provided in the Opioids at Work Employer Toolkit. Additional tips to build employee support include:

- Before policy implementation, hold open meetings to discuss the need for a policy with employees. Many materials in this toolkit will help you communicate the importance of the policy. Request feedback from employees – anonymously if that's helpful.
- Don't spring a policy on employees by surprise. This could result in long-term negativity and lack of respect for the policy. When unions are involved, union stewards are key stakeholders. Hold a pre-meeting to get them on board.
- Recognize that for some employees, this policy will change deeply ingrained beliefs and practices. Any change can bring initial stress. Give employees the opportunity to discuss potential barriers, conflicts and doubts. Objections and concerns are good to hear, because it gives employers a chance to address and overcome them.
- Ask employees to offer solutions to these objections. This makes employees part of the decision-making process, and the solutions become things they choose to do. Helping develop solutions also promotes a sense of ownership and accountability.
- Employees must see and hear that top management supports the policy. Employees will sense the level of commitment. If you don't have leadership commitment at the highest level, delay public rollout until you do.
- Invite discussion about privacy concerns. Be clear that this policy is about safety – not an effort to intrude on employee health care decisions. It is about protecting employees when they are at work, and educating them about the potential risks they may encounter if they are taking opioid medication, even as prescribed.
- Have a mix of senior management, front-line supervisors, union representatives and other employees serve as spokespeople for the new policy process.
- Tell compelling, vivid stories and testimonials from advocates who have been touched by the opioid epidemic, both at work and in their personal lives. Use video and public education resources available inside the Opioids at Work Employer Toolkit. If someone in your company has a personal story, invite him or her to share it if comfortable doing so.
- After policy implementation, communicate positive results to employees. Consider asking employees through an anonymous survey about behavior changes – have they applied anything they've learned to their own healthcare decisions? Have they taken materials home to their families and friends? The results may help reinforce the importance of the policy decision, or identify areas where changes need to be made.

Once you have employee buy-in, and have developed your drug free workplace program in conjunction with a cross-organization team that includes management, HR, safety professionals, employee representatives and others (legal authorities, union reps) as necessary, begin to roll out your opioids in the workplace program to employees.

Legal Implications

Every component of the drug free workplace program must:

- Be developed in partnership with the organization's legal advisers
- Safeguard employee confidentiality
- Comply with federal, state and local regulations, including but not limited to OSHA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Mental Health Parity Act and HIPAA
- Comply with union and industry regulations

The Opioids at Work Employer Toolkit has been developed to raise awareness with businesses about how to respond to the risks associated with the misuse of opioids and other drugs. The content is meant for educational purposes only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice or replacing the work needed to develop a responsible drug-free workplace program. As such, it should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a legal professional, or other competent advisor.

Medical advice and information in this document were approved by NSC physicians who advise the Council on our substance use harm initiatives. These doctors also are members of the [NSC Physician Speakers Bureau](#).