

The Community Case: Cost of Addiction in the U.S.

- Americans consume an estimated **60% of the world's production of illegal drugs**.
- Almost **20 million persons over the age of 12 use illegal drugs**.
- An estimated **54 million persons are binge drinkers**, while nearly **16 million are heavy drinkers**.
- In the criminal justice system alone, alcohol and drug related cases are the number one and two motives for felonies among a record prison population of almost **6 and a half million Americans—that's 1 in 32 adults**.
- There are approximately **half a million children in our foster care system**.
- The costs of addiction throughout multiple social systems pile up exponentially. The most recent estimate of the social cost of substance abuse in the U.S. **annually** approaches **\$500 billion**.

The Business Case: Cost of Addiction in the Workplace

Alcohol and drug use costs American business more than **\$170 billion** every year. More than **70 percent of substance abusers hold jobs; one worker in four, ages 18 to 34, used drugs in the past year; and one worker in three knows of drug sales in the workplace**. In the workplace, the problems of these substance abusers become our problems. They **increase risk of accident, lower productivity, raise insurance costs, and reduce profits**. Compared to their non-abusing coworkers, substance abusers are:

- **Ten times more likely** to miss work
- **3.6 times more likely** to be involved in on-the-job accidents (and **5 times more likely to injure themselves or another** in the process)
- **Five times more likely** to file a worker's compensation claim
- **33% less productive**
- Responsible for **health care costs that are three times as high**.
- They are also responsible for **40 percent of all industrial fatalities**.
- **Two out of three adults in the U.S. knows someone who has gone to work under the influence** of drugs or alcohol (Hazelden Foundation, 1996)

How Starting Your Club's Youth Mentoring Can Help Prevent Risks such as addiction

Chances are, each one of us knows someone who is dealing with addiction: the statistics tell us so. Clearly, for a social problem of this magnitude, we can make a business case for battling addiction. We can make a community case for battling addiction. And at the personal level, addiction causes a world of *secret* pain. Because addict persons themselves, and those who care about them, live a *secret* life, a life of denial or shame. A life in isolation from community. Research³ shows that the five promises of America's Promise minimize and prevent risk behaviors including addiction, among youth. Your club's youth programs do make a difference! Consider how to grow your club's impact in mentoring youth. For resources, go to the district website <http://www.rotary7390.org/AmPromise.htm> and check out the best practices, grant request form, PR materials & more. To request start up money for new initiatives, PR support, or to share your club's "best practices" with other clubs submit request via email to office@rotary7390.org

Sources & Resources:

¹The *Drug and Alcohol Services Information System (DASIS) Report*, Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001.

²American Council for Drug Education www.acde.org

³www.americaspromise.org

<http://www.rotary7390.org/AmPromise.htm>

www.sandpapersisters.com

What are the Signs of Abuse? Substance abusers in the workplace can be difficult to identify. But there are some clues that signal possible drug and alcohol problems. **Here's what to look for:**

- Frequent, prolonged, and often unexplained absences
- Involvement in accidents both on and off the job
- Erratic work patterns and reduced productivity
- Indifference to personal hygiene
- Overreaction to real or imagined criticism
- Such overt physical signs as exhaustion or hyperactivity, dilated pupils, slurred speech, or an unsteady walk

Marijuana users may have bloodshot or glassy eyes and a persistent cough. **Cocaine users** display increased energy and enthusiasm early in their drug involvement. Later they may be subject to extreme mood swings and can become paranoid or delusional. **Alcohol abusers** find it hard to conceal morning-after hangovers. Their productivity declines, and they may show signs of physical deterioration.

How Can it Be Prevented? A comprehensive drug-free workplace program may be the best means of preventing, detecting, and dealing with substance abusers. Such a program generally includes the following elements:

- A **written policy** that is supported by top management, understood by all employees, consistently enforced, and perfectly clear about what is expected of employees and the consequences of policy violations
- A substance abuse prevention program with an **employee drug education component** that focuses not only on the dangers of drug and alcohol use but also on the availability of counseling and treatment
- **Training** of managers, front-line supervisors, human resource personnel, medical staff, and others in **identifying and dealing with substance abusers**
- An appropriate drug and alcohol testing component, designed to prevent the hiring of workers who use illegal drugs and—as part of a comprehensive program—provide early identification and referral to treatment for employees with drug or alcohol problems
- An **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

Employee Assistance Programs that **provide counseling for employees and their family members** are structured to help workers with a wide range of problems. Substance abuse is a primary concern. Working with substance abusers, EAP professionals seek to provide whatever assistance makes it possible for employees to remain on or return to the job. Many companies offer counseling and treatment services or refer employees to services in the community. It is sometimes necessary for workers to take **time off for treatment**. In these cases, successful completion of a rehabilitation program generally brings the former substance abusers back to the workforce.

What Can You Do? Substance abusers in the workplace create a problem that affects you and should concern you. There are a number of ways in which you can do something about it.

Don't be an "enabler." When you cover up for substance abusers, lend them money, or help conceal poor work performance, you are protecting them from the consequences of their behavior. You are making it possible for them to continue abusing drugs or alcohol. You may think you're being a friend, but you are doing them no favor.

Don't "look the other way." If you suspect drugs are being used or being sold, you should pass the word to a supervisor or to security or human resources personnel. Such contacts are confidential and, in many organizations, this information can be conveyed anonymously.

Don't intervene on your own. Drug abuse and drug dealing are serious problems that should be handled by qualified professionals.

Don't worry about jeopardizing a substance abuser's job. Employees are often reluctant to let management know when they suspect drug activity, worried that any coworkers they identify will be penalized or even lose their jobs. The reality is that you place a co-worker in far greater jeopardy when you don't report your concern and, in that way, make continued drug use possible.

Bear in mind that the threat of being fired often provides a potent deterrent to substance abuse and will prompt many drug- and alcohol-troubled workers to accept help when they had previously ignored the pleas of family and friends. Faced with the possibility of losing their jobs, workers who had refused to recognize or acknowledge their substance abuse are often motivated to enter treatment and—what may be even more important—remain in treatment long enough to make fundamental changes in attitudes and behavior. **Source: American Council for Drug Education**
www.acde.org