

Mental Health and Addiction: Are You Addressing It In Your Workplace?

RICK GEHLBACH, LICENSED PROFESSIONAL CLINICAL COUNSELOR

SENIOR CLINICAL CONSULTANT, OHIOHEALTH



What Impacts Mental Health in Construction and Manufacturing?

Physical exhaustion due to hard labor

Success determined by productivity and output

Long working hours

Excessive noise

Lack of sufficient daylight if working indoors

Physical injuries and chronic pain

Competitive work culture

Increase in alcohol and substance abuse

Seasonal layoffs

Lack of connectedness to the company outside of work team

The Hartford 2021 Future of Benefits Study

70% of US employers recognize mental health as a significant workplace issue

72% of US employers said that stigma associated with mental illness prevents asking for help

59% of US workers said that their company culture has been more accepting of mental health challenges over the last year, compared to 80% of employers

52% of US workers said their company encourages conversations about mental health, compared to 79% of employers

56% of workers say they have flexibility in their schedule for mental health treatment, compared to 78% of employers

31% of US employers says employee mental health strain is having a significant to severe impact on the company (21% a year ago)

52% of employers said that substance misuse/addiction has significant to severe impact

The link between substance use and suicide

Often prescribed painkillers to be able to work and manage pain

20% of prescribed medications for workers are opioids

Opioid use increases likelihood of suicide attempts by 75%

Men with opioid addiction are twice as likely to suicide

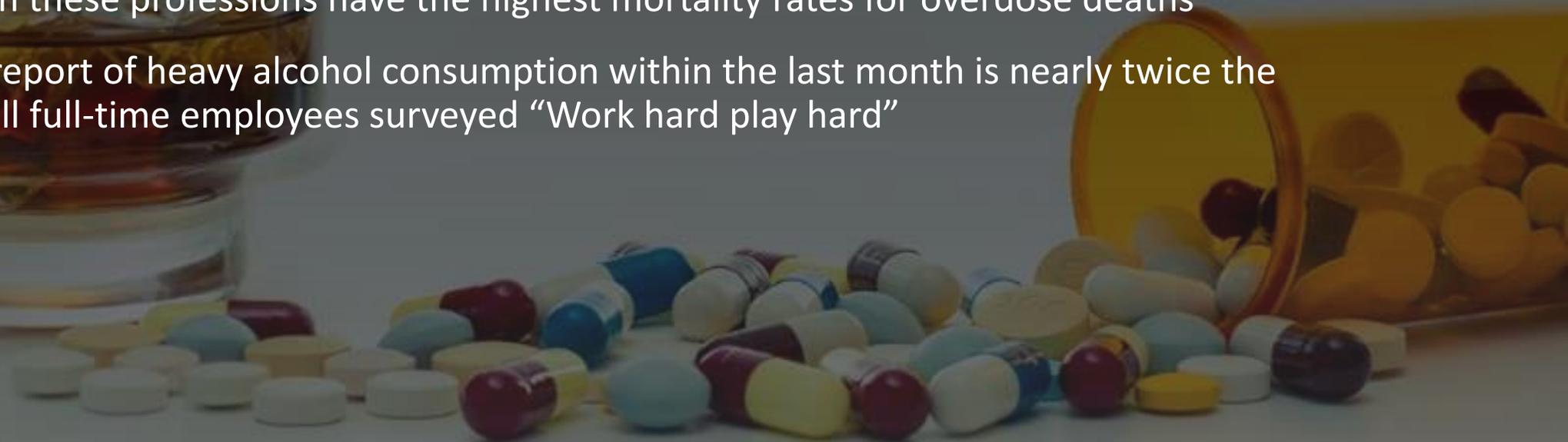
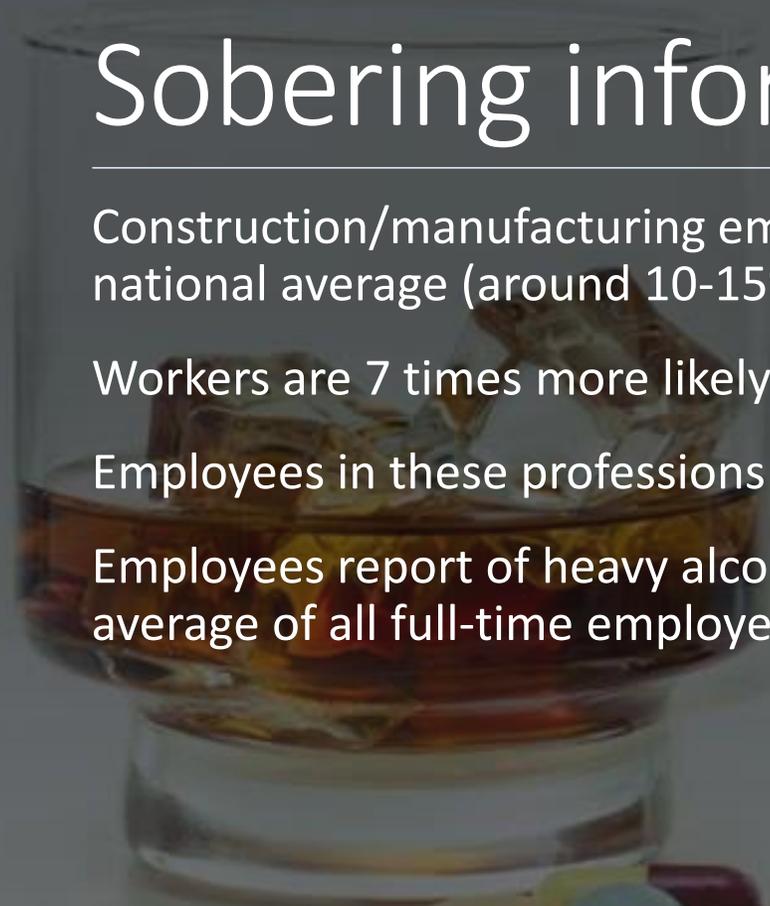
Sobering information on substance use

Construction/manufacturing employees have nearly twice the rate of substance abuse as the national average (around 10-15%)

Workers are 7 times more likely to die from opioid overdose than workers in other profession

Employees in these professions have the highest mortality rates for overdose deaths

Employees report of heavy alcohol consumption within the last month is nearly twice the average of all full-time employees surveyed “Work hard play hard”



A psychologically healthy workplace has...

Encouragement and expectations of respectful behavior and clear guidelines about harassment and bullying

Clear definition of employee duties and responsibilities

Encouragement of people voicing opinions on subjects that concern them

Recognition of good work and service

Development and learning





Recognizing Disruption in Good Mental Health

Difficulty with concentration and decision making

Lack of energy, restlessness, irritability, or low mood

Changes in appetite or weight

Episodes of crying

Increase in work-related complaints

Making more mistakes than usual

Increase in physical complaints

Decreased productivity

Morale problems

Difficulties with co-workers

Absenteeism/tardiness

Concentration lapses

Isolation from co-workers

Symptoms of
depression
in the
workplace

What can we do to help our employees?

Creating a safe space (reaching out on a human level)

Provide your team with proper support (counseling services, mental health days)

Education/awareness (recognition of symptoms, stress management training)

Know the warning signs!



Having a conversation about mental health

Choose a comfortable, private space where you won't be interrupted

Ask open and non-judgmental questions

Don't diagnose

Show support without being intrusive

If you suspect a mental health issue, refer!

Work to find ways to support the employee

Warning Signs of Suicide

Recent important losses

Spoken or written threats of suicide

High risk behaviors

Major changes in sleep or eating patterns

Withdrawal and loss of interest

Obsession with death

Talking with Someone Who is at Risk

Tell the person that you care and are worried

Describe what you have noticed

Be willing to listen and provide support

Ask concerned questions about the person's feelings

Discuss options and create a plan together

Offer hope

If possible, have the conversations in person or by phone



What Should You Do and Say?

Ask about suicide

Listen without judgment - gather information

If they are suicidal, act right away

- Direct them to call 911 or to go to the emergency room
- Let them know that you want to keep them safe
- Call the EAP with questions



How To Deal With Employee Anger

Encourage the employee to talk

Maintain a respectful attitude, watch your body language

Acknowledge their feelings

Eye contact

Be patient

Use their name

Do they need a cooling off period?

When should you refuse unacceptable behavior?



Ways to diminish addiction for employees



Compassionate and non-judgmental approach



Strong, consistent workplace policies



Working to reduce stigma



Having a referral network

Employee education

Supervisor training

Written workplace drug-free policy

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP's)

Drug Testing

Re-structuring of employee benefits

Recommendations to Address Addictive Substances





Take care of yourself!

Develop relationships with people you can turn to for support

Be aware of how many hours you are working

Be aware of the symptoms and signs in yourself

Help is there for you as well!

Overall recommendations

Educate

Encourage

Communicate

Discourage

Invest

Help

Consult



Questions/comments?

THANK YOU!!