

Employers Engage Recovery Coaches to Achieve Workforce Sobriety

By [Beth Siegert](#) - March 3, 2021

What are the effects on the health and well-being of our work force during the pandemic? Pre-COVID-19, it was reported that one in four individuals experienced a diagnosable mental health condition annually. Since COVID, employees are manifesting a wide variety of psychological problems, including a large increase in substance misuse and other addictive behaviors. These are contributing to professional and personal disruption and impacting the bottom line at alarming rates.

Such behaviors escalate an employer's risks and costs due to the effects on an employee's health, performance and the business's brand reputation. Unfortunately, struggling individuals do not operate in a bubble. Everyone is affected including employers, co-workers, clients, friends and family members.

Alcohol and drug abuse deeply impact the business, from lost productivity, injuries, less effectiveness with clients and an increase in health insurance claims. Drug and alcohol misuse by employees costs US companies \$100 billion dollars per year, according to the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI). Recent increases in overdose rates strongly suggest these numbers underestimate the damaging emotional costs related to Covid-19. These mind-boggling numbers do not include the cost of diverting company resources to addressing the effects of substance misuse. And they do not include the pain and suffering to employees, colleagues, and the workplace as a whole, which can't be accurately measured in numbers.

CPRCs Prove Viable Alternative to Traditional Approaches

“HR considers substance misuse one of the most serious issues among the workforce,” says Cheryl Brown Merriwether, executive director of the [International Center for Addiction and Recovery Education](#) (ICARE) and President of GOSHRM.

Most people are familiar with Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which began in the 1930s as a way to help employees deal with alcoholism. Unfortunately, less than 5% of employees utilize them on an annual basis.

“In a cost-basis analysis, greater use of EAPs is necessary, especially at this critical time when the pandemic has many corporate leaders rethinking the best ways to retain and support a productive and resilient workforce,” advises Merriwether.

Other traditional options to handle addiction include in-patient and out-patient treatment, detoxes, therapy/counseling, 12 Step programs and other recovery support groups. Though statistics vary the most commonly cited are:

- 8% of individuals with a substance use disorder receive treatment in a given year.
- The relapse rate after inpatient treatment is reported to be approximately 50% in the first 12 months, and the drop-out rate from treatment is approximately 40%.

Clearly traditional treatments are not enough. Smart employers are beginning to recognize the benefits of using Certified Professional Recovery Coaches (CPRC). These individuals are trained to deliver an effective risk assessment to mitigate risk, promote resilience to avert overuse of substances, protect employees, increase engagement, and lower employer costs.

By working directly with the business and/or struggling employee recovery coaches are getting these individuals back to work, often functioning better than before. If utilized prior to an identified issue, the CPRC may provide education to the employer, regarding the how tos of identifying and addressing addiction. Employers must engage in programs such as [Strategic Sobriety Workforce Solutions](#), BEFORE the employee hits rock bottom to avert potentially devastating consequences.

CPRCs are well-trained, deeply experienced substance abuse experts who:

- Focus on what matters most to the individual, business, family, and others seeking help.
- Use specific approaches proven to improve engagement in treatment and outcomes. An important element of effectively motivating people who are resistant to change is to understand what the person wants and needs, so time isn't wasted with ineffective approaches.
- Offer leadership training and customized plans to help the employer effectively address both employees of concern as well as employees' concerns. They train employees, including HR professionals to recognize substance use disorders, on and off the job.
- Boost EAP utilization by serving as an anonymous, confidential third party.

CPRCs help clients:

- Navigate the addiction treatment world, helping them understand how to determine best solutions for the individual.
- Engage in treatment in a motivated way, using strategies that are effective alternatives to the traditional interventions. Coaches pull the client's untapped resilience to help them become free from problematic behaviors and stigma.
- Bring together people and processes to overcome the unprecedented societal challenges of addiction.
- Stay engaged in, and successfully moving toward, long-term recovery, often maintaining consistent communication with additional treatment professionals.
- Provide a one-to-one interaction with someone who not only understands where they are, but has been there – In this way, CPRCs guide addicts to take their next steps to obtain and most importantly maintain sobriety.

If you don't think your company has anyone who would fit the bill, consider this:

Jennifer suffers from depression. Since working from home due to Covid, she has moved her 5PM glass of wine earlier and earlier in the day. She doesn't want to lose her job, but is finding it harder every day to drag herself in front of her computer, to participate in the Zoom calls, to simultaneously manage home schooling her children. She tells herself that no one will notice if her coffee cup doesn't have coffee in it – right?

Jim is an alcoholic and doesn't know it. He thinks this is not affecting his job, but it is. He thinks being an executive with his company, his supervisor will grant him endless passes.

EVP Joe's wife just called him and reported that their son's dependence on opioids has turned to heroin. It all started innocently with a basketball injury resulting in Vicodin being prescribed for a knee injury. Joe and his wife don't know what to do. He is trying to keep it together at work. He is finding it harder to concentrate, keep his schedule straight and meet deadlines.

If your company has 100 employees, it is likely that eight or nine of them are walking in Jennifer's or Joe's or Jim's shoes. These struggling employees would benefit greatly from working with a Certified Professional Recovery Coach.

Employers are in a powerful position to address employee addiction by creating a corporate culture that does not stigmatize the problem. Offering a supportive environment and engaging alternative resources such as CPRCs, will create and maintain a healthy, high performance workplace today and well after the pandemic is over.

Beth Siegert is a professional executive recovery coach who has been a recovery and life coach for more than 25 years. She is a graduate of the CPC, CPRC and CFAA programs of the International Association of Professional Recovery Coaches (IAPRC), as well as an affiliate. Beth helps clients better perceive and understand relationships that repeatedly lead to substance abuse, and to understand which (if any) work situations are strongly associated with relapse and how to successfully navigate these. For more info visit siegertandassociates.com.