

# ARE YOU PREPARED TO ADDRESS OPIOID MISUSE AT YOUR SMALL BUSINESS?



The opioid epidemic has reached frightening levels in the United States. Yet, unlike other types of illegal drug use, opioid misuse can begin when someone is legally prescribed a powerful painkiller by their doctor. Here's what you should consider doing if an employee is misusing opioids.

## THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM



**33.3%**  
of Americans either know someone who has overdosed or know someone with an opioid addiction



**8-12%**  
of people prescribed opioids for chronic pain develop an opioid use disorder



**69%**  
of HR professionals feel their company isn't very prepared to deal with opioid addiction



**\$78.5 billion**  
costs related to crime, lost work productivity and health care due to prescription opioids

## WHAT YOU CAN DO AS AN EMPLOYER

### Know Your Limits

- Don't make assumptions. Employees may be taking opioids for a legitimate reason
- Keep ADA rules in mind - only ask about medication use if you suspect it is interfering with core job duties
- Inform yourself about opioid misuse and empower your team by providing education and support resources.
- Lean on your benefits providers, such as workers' compensation insurer, to help prevent misuse.



### Create Strong Drug-Free Workplace Policies

- Have strong, written workplace drug-use policies and keep them within the bounds of federal, state and local employment laws
- Lay out protocols for breaking these policies, along with how and when any drug testing will be conducted
- Get input from an employment law expert when creating your policy, and ensure they're enforced fairly and consistently

### Focus on Performance and Policies

- When meeting with an employee you know or suspect is misusing opioids, focus any discussions or corrective actions on their performance issues and violation of workplace policies - including the drug-use policy
- If an employee has clearly violated a policy or does not take steps to correct their performance, you may want to get legal advice on how to terminate that employee



### Be Helpful and Sensitive, but Not Overly Involved

- Show sympathy to an employee and direct them to helpful resources, such as EAP, or addiction treatment services
- Use your written policies and protocols to ensure you're approaching things in a fair and disciplined way

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | National Institute on Drug Abuse | Dol.gov EEOC.gov | ACLU.org | The Hartford's Opioids in the Workplace Survey | Shatterproof | NPR / Ipsos