

Mental Health and Substance Use at Work

Recovery Friendly



Employer Toolkit

Implementing RFW: A Month-By-Month Plan

Once you've decided to address mental health and substance use challenges at your workplace, this calendar can help you through the implementation process. Include your marketing/communications teams, HR, safety team, legal and union representatives (if necessary) and others in this process. This calendar is an example of a twelve month plan – feel free to edit, adjust and reorganize depending on your organization's unique needs and capacity.

We encourage you to refer to *Communicating with Employees About Substance Use* for tips on how to communicate your policy to employees once it is finalized.

Each organization's timeline will be different. For some organizations, some tasks may take longer. For others, they may happen more quickly. Be flexible with expectations. If you feel that your organization is more suited to taking the key steps one by one, or in chunks, please refer to 'Getting Started' for guidance.

MONTH ONE

- Assemble your implementation team. Suggested members include HR, safety professionals, legal counsel and union representatives (if applicable). Ask your team to download and review the materials in this kit that are relevant to them. The kit is divided into sections for HR, safety, supervisors and employees.
- Review your company's existing drug-free workplace policy.
- Educate yourself about the scope of mental health and substance use challenges and the unique issues facing employers. The RFW Overview has all the information you need to get up to speed.
- Add your own tasks:

MONTH TWO

- Ask your HR implementation team member to draft a revised drug-free workplace policy based on the core tenants outlined in *Developing a Drug-Free Workplace Program* section of this toolkit.
- Ask your benefits specialist to work with your employee insurance provider to expand coverage so it includes alternative pain treatment options, such as acupuncture, and all forms of medication assisted treatment and behavioral health interventions and programs for substance use disorders.
- Host your first meeting with your executive team to brief them on what you've learned and actions you've taken. Solicit feedback and take next steps to ensure leadership buy-in.
- Add your own tasks:

MONTH THREE

- Take the draft through a review process (ask for review from a team of leadership, supervisors, safety professionals, and employees). Send the draft of the new Drug-Free Workplace Policy to union representatives, if appropriate, for review after changes have been incorporated and agreed upon.
- Review your pre-employment drug testing panel. Expand the drug testing panel so it includes detection of substances including opioids and alcohol.
- Ask your benefits specialist to meet with your organization's employee assistance program (EAP), and to determine what they can provide for people who have a substance use disorder. Make notes of any gaps and take back to the team to identify what to add.
- Add your own tasks:

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MONTH FOUR

- Meet with your communications team to brief them on the impending changes to the drug-free workplace policy. Provide them with Communicating with Employees About Mental Health and Substance Use so they can start building a strategy to roll out the new plan to employees. Remember, all successful plans require employee buy-in.
- Brief your executive leadership again on additional progress.
- Send your draft policy to legal counsel feedback on the draft policy.
- Develop curriculum for training supervisors on managing impairment and substance use in the workplace.
- Train Supervisors to ensure all relevant components are present.
- Add your own tasks:

MONTH FIVE

- Integrate your legal counsel's feedback and re-circulate to reviewers before submitting the drug-free workplace policy to executive leadership for review.
- Circle back on outstanding items that may be taking longer than expected.
- Add your own tasks:

MONTH SIX

- Finalize plans with your EAP provider to include all desired benefits pertaining to employees who have a substance or opioid use disorder.
- Finalize plans with your insurance provider so alternative pain treatment options are covered under employees' plans, and to include access to treatment as a benefit.
- Check in with National Safety Council experts to discuss your progress and ask questions. Email opioidsafety@nsc.org.
- Add your own tasks:

MONTH SEVEN

- Host a meeting with company supervisors to brief them on the new policy. Consider a Recovery Friendly Workplace presentation to provide more details. *Contact MHAS to schedule.*
- Provide supervisors with all materials available in the supervisor's section of this toolkit. Solicit feedback and answer questions.
- Initiate supervisor training programming.
- Add your own tasks:

MONTH EIGHT

- Review the communications team's roll-out plan. Send the final version to supervisors.
- Meet with executive leadership to brief them on progress and present your employee communications plan.
- Add your own tasks:

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MONTH NINE

- Start integrating RFW messages and information in employee newsletters. Tell them you will be making changes to the company's drug-free workplace program and ask them to stay tuned for additional information and feedback.
- Ask supervisors to begin using the 5 Minute Safety Talks, videos or other educational materials included in this toolkit during staff meetings.
- Add your own tasks:

MONTH TEN

- Host an all-staff meeting and present the Opioids 101 PPT included in this kit
- Tell employees that they will receive a copy of the drug-free workplace policy next month. Before then, encourage employees to ask questions and discuss concerns with their supervisors. Remember, open communication is critical to employee buy-in.
- Order Warn Me labels in preparation for your rollout – learn more on best ways to implement them in the Warn Me Label User Guide. Hang the Warn Me labels poster and ask employees to affix Warn Me labels to their insurance cards.
- Add your own tasks:

MONTH ELEVEN

- Provide employees with a copy of the Drug-Free Workplace Policy. Work with your IT department to establish an email account so employees can send confidential concerns directly to the implementation team, with no fear of retribution.
- Host a town hall meeting to answer employee questions. Stress that you are moving toward a recovery-friendly workplace culture – one that values safety and treats substance use disorders as a chronic disease rather than a decision or moral failure.
- Begin affixing posters available in this toolkit around the office. Post the Understanding Opioids video to your company intranet.
- Add your own tasks:

MONTH TWELVE

- Implement your policy.
- Begin your communications roll-out plan.
- Add your own tasks:

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Decide how your organization wants to monitor success of your policies and procedures. Considering using the Sample Employee Engagement Survey to obtain feedback from employees, and work with your third party administrators to assess how prescribing rates, EAP access and other data changes over time.

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Make sure that you keep supplies in stock – for example, include Warn Me labels during your new-hire orientation, and at the beginning of the calendar year when new health insurance cards may be issued.

Have consistent messaging about ways to seek help at work, and ensure managers and supervisors are promptly and consistently trained on what to do if an employee asks for help.

Remember that talking about addiction and substance use disorders can be very personal for some people– defensive reactions are common. While abiding by your organization’s drug free workplace policy is not optional, employee’s privacy must be respected. Employees should not feel pressured to publicly disclose personal information.

NEED HELP?

If you have questions or need help finding materials related to opioid use, please contact opioidsafety@nsc.org.

The Mental Health and Substance Use at Work Employer Toolkit has been developed to raise awareness with businesses about how to respond to the risks associated with mental health challenges and substance use disorder. The content is meant for educational purposes only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice or replacing the additional work needed to develop a responsible Recovery Friendly 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 The National Safety Council-NSC physicians who advise the Council on our substance use harm initiatives. These doctors are also members of the NSC Physician Speakers Bureau.

If you have questions or need help finding materials, please contact admin@huroncountymhas.org.