Supporting Professionals In Recovery
Ohio Opiate Conference 2019
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Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to identify ethical and unique challenges of sustained recovery for professionals.

- Participants will recognize strategies for professionals in recovery to locate appropriate supports.

- Participants will recognize strategies for supervisors and employers to utilize to better support and encourage staff in recovery.

- Participants will be aware of community initiatives to offer additional support to high-functioning members of their communities.
Addiction does not Discriminate?

There are a variety of professionals in recovery
- Substance Abuse Professionals with a recovery background
- Professionals with a recovery background
- Professionals who have developed a substance use disorder

Many of the information discussed could also be applicable to family members of individuals in recovery.

This becomes problematic when the responsibilities, ethical guidelines, and public image of a particular profession limits the ability to participate in traditional sober support.
Contributing Factors (not an inclusive list)

- High stress/pressure
- Burnout
- Ease of access to medication
- Long hours/unconventional shifts
- Lack of self-care
- Working with difficult populations
- Social pressures
- A lifestyle that promotes alcohol in social situations or to relax
- Lack of support/confidentiality guidelines
- Difficulty establishing peer support
- Professional ethics/boundaries
- Regional or professional isolation
Statistics

- 80% of educated, upper-income Americans reportedly drink alcohol compared with 50% of lower-income Americans and those with a high-school diploma (2015 Gallop poll)

- Professionals earning more than $75,000 per year drink more alcohol than any other economic group (2015 Gallop poll)

- About 10 to 12 percent of the general population becomes addicted to alcohol or drugs at some point in their lives compared with 12 to 19 percent of dentists and physicians (The Arizona Society of Medicine)
Recovery means that individuals are now in control of their lives and functioning in a manner that gives them satisfaction and improved health. (SAMHSA)
Barriers to Seeking Recovery

- Embarrassment/Shame
- Stigma
- Legal consequences
- Punitive measures by licensing boards/professional organizations
- Lack of resources
- Concerns for Confidentiality
- Lack of knowledge
- Professional reputation
- Rural areas/small communities/boundaries
- Cost
  - Time and money
Sharli’s Story
Seeking Support

- Professional Counseling/Treatment
  - EAP
- MAT
  - Telehealth
- Self-Help Groups
  - Geographical separation
- Church/spiritual organizations
- Online Networks
- Fitness
- Yoga
- Profession-specific help groups
Strategies for Employers
Creating a Recovery Friendly Work Environment

- Create a corporate culture that acknowledges the reality of employee substance use and have a policy to address it
  - Universal Precaution

- Integrate support, prevention and early intervention with a wellness focus
  - Encourage Self-Care

- Code of Professional Conduct

- Develop policies for dealing with use, misuse, relapse and reintegration

- Train management/supervisory staff on identifying warning signs early

- Differentiate between misconduct and gross misconduct
  - When misconduct is addressed early in can help prevent gross misconduct
Recovery Friendly Policies

- Support stress management
- Encourage self-report
- Clear drug testing policy
  - Reasonable cause testing preferred over random drug testing
- Allow for leave of absence
- Define time period for treatment
- Substance Abuse Benefits of Health Insurance
- Short-term/Long-term disability
- EAP
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- Contracted neutral third party
- Provide a confidential assessment and/or specified number of sessions
- Effectively deal with personal problems contributing to work problems
- Self-referral or Supervisor Referral
- Consider services for family members
- Potential for specified services upon termination
- Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA)
Supportive Supervision

- Frequent, Focused, Attentive
- Maintain appropriate boundaries
- Practice empathy
- Avoid promises
- Practice respect
- Keep a list of local peer support
- Assist in locating professional help
Warning Signs of Use/Abuse

- Unexplained absenteeism
- Abuse of work hours
  - Missing deadlines, long lunches, frequent breaks, tardiness, seeking excessive overtime
- Finances
  - Cash advances, borrowing money from co-workers
- Productivity and Effectiveness
  - Increase or Decrease
- Quality Assurance
- Client feedback
Addressing Suspected Use

- Focus on objective performance
- Describe the work/behavior
- Do not provide diagnostic information
- Avoid assumptions or accusations
- Offer assistance
  - EAP
  - Short-term Disability
  - FMLA
Re-Integration Plan

- Defined:
  - Activities
  - Standards
  - Goals
  - Guidelines
  - Benchmarks
  - Rewards
  - Sanctions
 Returning to Work

- Negative Drug Screen
- Return-to-Duty Contract/Return to Work Agreement
- Continued participation in treatment
- Documentations of Maintaining Qualifications
- Progressive Discipline resumes as prior to leave
- The choice to discuss the leave of absence is the employee’s
Strategies for Communities
Community Supports for Recovery

- Support recovery oriented education and events
- Join or form community coalitions and recovery groups
  - Incorporate outlets for physical activities
- Advocate for recovery legislation
- Provide locations for self-help groups and sober events
- Self-help groups specific to professionals
- Variety of self-help groups
- Explore ways for local businesses to support efforts
- Options for treatment in lieu for non-violent offenses
- Improve accessibility to support
  - Resource guides, social media, websites
References

- https://www.samhsa.gov/partners-for-recovery/resources-links
References

- http://www.drugrehab.org/expert-area/help-for-the-healers-resources-for-impaired-healthcare-professionals/
- http://brsrehab.com/2017/03/08/guide-to-addiction-recovery-for-work-professionals/
- https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/medical-professionals/