Employers experience the effects of untreated addiction in lost productivity, inattentiveness at work, higher risk for workplace injuries, absenteeism, turnover, health care expenses, workers’ compensation, and increased taxes to pay for costs accrued to the public sector. There are costs that are incurred both by employees and employees’ families. Addiction affects employees in every industry, but construction, entertainment, recreation, and food service have rates of employee substance use that are twice the national average. These costs are largely avoidable for employers who invest in treatment and recovery. Employees whose addiction is effectively addressed have fewer days of unscheduled leave, have lower rates of turnover, and use fewer health care services.¹

Key Recommendations for Investing in Addiction Supports in the Workplace:

- Provide education and information about substance misuse and addiction, including information about prevention and treatment, to employees²
- Include information about addiction prevention in employee wellness programs²
- Cover addiction treatment in employee health plans²
- Ensure that employees who screen positive for drug use are referred to treatment
- Train managers to identify and respond to substance misuse among employees²
- Provide supports to help employees return to work after completing treatment through Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)²
- To reduce stigma, create a compassionate environment to support employees who have addiction or who have a family member with addiction

75% of individuals with a substance use disorder are employed¹ | Annual cost to employer for an employee with untreated addiction = $2,600 - $13,000¹ | Average annual cost savings to employer for employee in recovery = $3,200¹
Addressing Addiction in the Workplace Action Plan

How will you take the information you learned in this session and convert it to action in your state?

For Legislative Participants:
1. How can you support employers in your state that provide addiction supports to their employees and their families?
2. How can you encourage employers in your state to provide addiction supports to their employees and families?
3. Is there a “champion” employer in your state or district that provides these types of supports?
4. How can you help constituents in your state who are in recovery find jobs?
5. Are there barriers in your state that prevent people in recovery from getting jobs? How can those barriers be reduced?

For Corporate Participants:
1. Does your company provide addiction supports?
   a. Does your company require drug testing? If so, what is your company’s policy if an employee screens positive?
   b. Does your company offer an employee wellness program? If so, does it include information about addiction?
   c. Does your employer health plan cover addiction treatment?
2. What is your company’s culture toward addiction?
3. If you or a family member were struggling with addiction, would you feel comfortable sharing that information at work?
4. What suggestions would you make to your employer about improving addiction supports?

Additional Resources:
- Real Costs of Substance Use in Your Workforce Calculator
- National Safety Council, Drugs at Work: What Employers Need to Know
- National Safety Council, Prescription Drug Employer Kit

Sources: