

A Guide For Employers Being Proactive About Fighting Substance Abuse

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Fighting substance abuse in the workplace is one of those things nearly every employer will have to deal with at some point. Given the high number of people struggling with drug or alcohol abuse, there's a chance some of them are in your workplace. Being proactive about [substance abuse](#) gives you an advantage as you'll have a framework of how to deal with any cases you find, way before there's an occurrence.

If you think substance abuse in the workplace isn't something to get worked up about, here's what it can lead to:

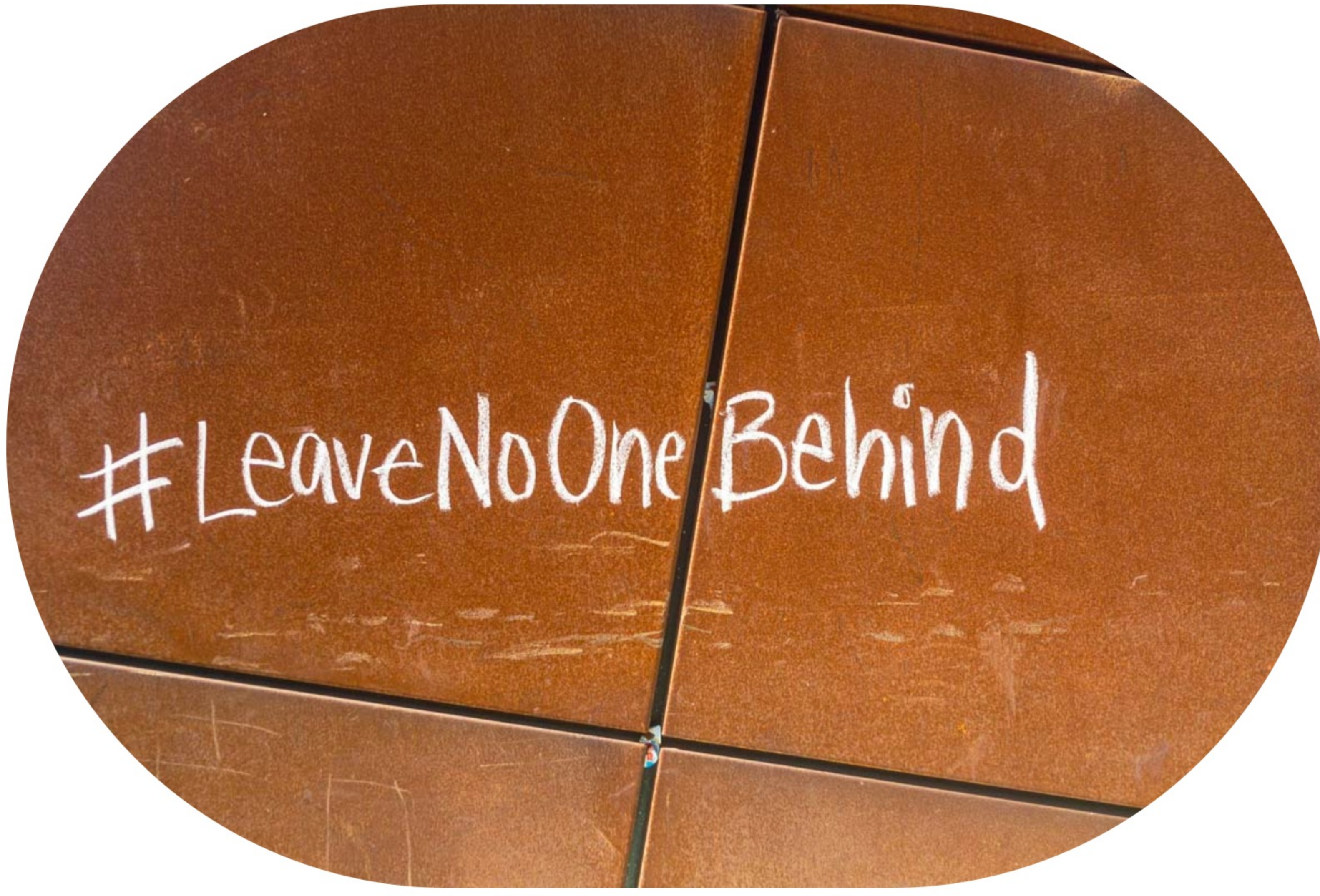
- **Low productivity**
- **Increased absenteeism**
- **Friction among co-workers either because they have to cover for the one struggling with addiction or there are always arguments once someone reports to work while under the influence.**
- **Reduced concentration in the workplace leads to more accidents and injuries.**
- **Increased accidents and injuries, in turn, lead to higher compensation and insurance costs as well as sick leave.**
- **All these incidents can contribute to damaging the company's public image.**

For an employer, substance abuse in the workplace can result in financial losses through higher worker's compensation or insurance claims. Add the reduced productivity and job performance or absenteeism and you realize that alcohol or drug abuse in the workplace can result in employers incurring huge financial losses.

The best way to minimize this is by protecting yourself by instituting a Substance Abuse Program in the workplace. This way, you communicate to your employees that you have zero tolerance for drug or alcohol use in the workplace. Both you and your employees will know what's required and the consequences of going against the policy.

Here are the steps to take as you become proactive about fighting substance abuse in your workplace:

Formulating a Drug and Alcohol Policy



Creating a clear and comprehensive workplace Substance Abuse Policy communicates your company's stance against alcohol and drug use at work. It should show and reinforce your commitment to a drug and alcohol-free workplace. Given that companies and workplaces are different, take your time to formulate a policy that embraces your company's uniqueness and values.

When formulating the policy, it's good practice to involve employees from different levels so you can get varying perspectives. The policy should clearly outline:

- Your stand on substance abuse in the workplace and why drug and alcohol use isn't permitted at work.
- What's expected of your employees regarding substance abuse at work.
- The company's position on drug testing.
- The consequences for violating the policy.

Training supervisors in the workplace.

Once you've come up with a workplace drug and alcohol abuse policy, the next step is to train supervisors in the workplace. Supervisors have frequent direct contact with employees and are best suited to notice when things go wrong. A Supervisory Training Program should prepare them to identify and know how to deal with substance abuse issues that they notice among employees. Make it clear that their role isn't to diagnose or treat substance abuse but identify and refer such employees for further assistance.

Supervisors need to understand the Substance Abuse Policy and explain it to employees. They should be trained on various drugs and the common signs of abuse to look out for as well as what to do once they identify employees showing any of those signs.

Educating your employees.



After the supervisors have been trained, your employees are next. This means coming up with an Employee Education and Awareness Program. Keep in mind that educating your workers on substance abuse in the workplace isn't a one-time thing. It has to be done continuously to ensure all workers are aware of your substance abuse policy. New hires should also be educated.

Your Employee Education and Awareness Program should:

- Explain the workplace substance misuse policy and the consequences of violating that policy.
- Educate workers on drugs/alcohol and the effect these have on individuals and in the workplace.
- Explain the workplace drug testing process.
- Explain how and where the workers can get help should they need it.

When educating your workers, remember to consider their needs and balance them with the requirements of the workplace.

Instituting an Employee Assistance Program.

Employees are human and this means that they'll inevitably have issues in their lives. These range from substance abuse, family problems, financial difficulties, and mental health problems. It's a good policy for employers to have an Employee Assistance Program to help their workers through any rough patches. This will not only reduce cases of absenteeism but also boost productivity and performance.

The assistance program should help you identify and resolve problems among workers. When it comes to substance abuse in the workplace, the assistance program should outline how workers can be referred to rehab or other addiction treatment centers such as Evolve Indy for treatment. These facilities often have a variety of addiction treatment programs on an inpatient basis, partial hospitalization, or outpatient basis (Intensive outpatient programs and traditional [outpatient programs](#)) to better suit your workers' schedules. Follow-up services are also offered to ensure individuals stay on the recovery path.

Coming up with a Workplace Drug Testing Program

Your workplace substance abuse policy should also include a Drug Testing Program. Depending on the kind of work you do, this may be compulsory for companies in your industry. If not, you decide whether or not to institute one at your workplace. If you do come up with one, remember to communicate it to your workers. For best results, this should not be the only policy regarding drugs or alcohol in the workplace but should be part of a comprehensive program.

As part of the program, decide on who to test, when, and how often. You also need to decide what drugs to test for as well as the action to be taken should an employee's test turn positive.

When deciding to become proactive about fighting substance abuse in the workplace, remember that the policies and programs you institute should be fair to your workers and legally defensible.

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