



AGC
THE CONSTRUCTION
ASSOCIATION

Youturn
HEALTH®

Supporting Your Team:

Approaching Substance Use and Suicidal Ideation in Construction

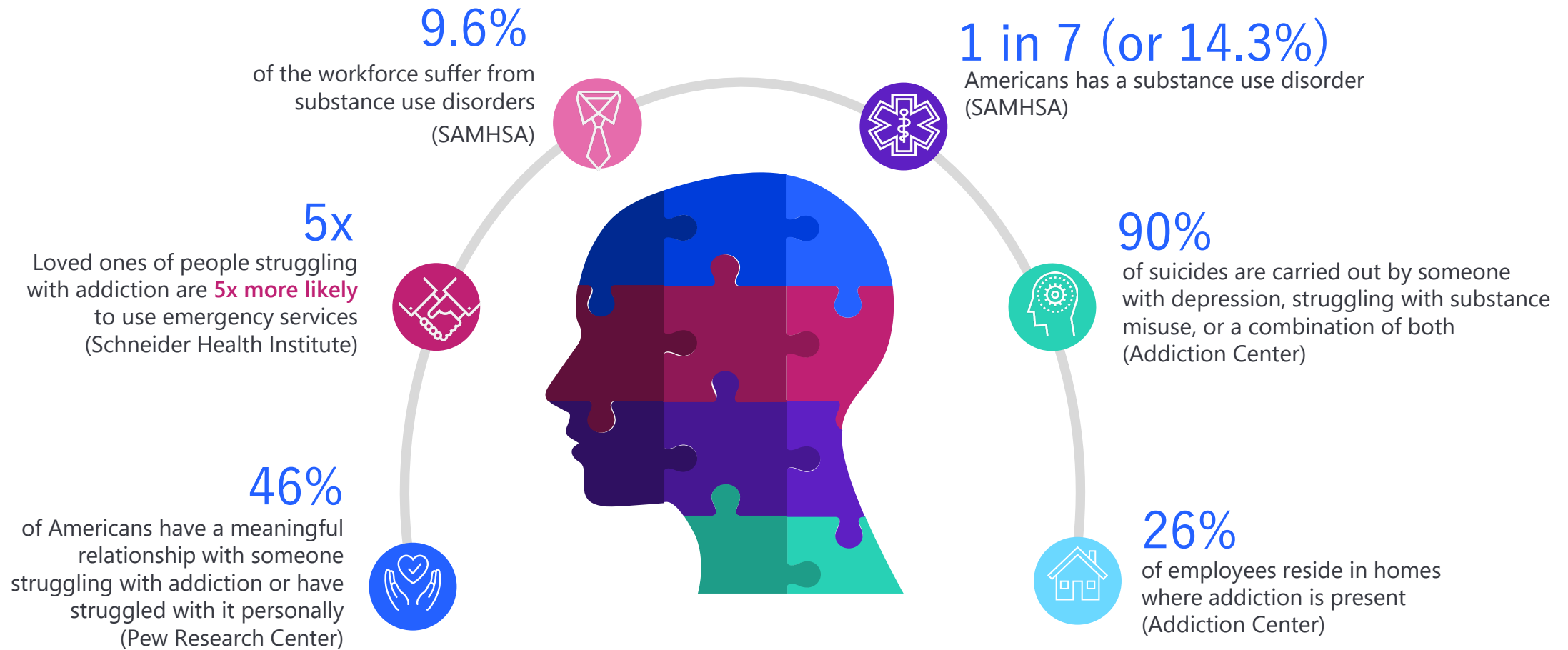
Richard Jones, Chief Clinical Officer, Youturn Health

Heather Strong Gutierrez, Safety Manager, JHL Constructors

May 2024

Substance Use in the Workplace

Defining the Problem



Who Addiction Affects

Employers

A loss in productivity affects employers directly. If substance use is rampant, it can result in loss of the revenue. Estimates suggest working users are one-third less productive than their non using co-workers. Also, working while under the influence of substances increases the risk of workplace related injury, resulting in increased insurance premiums.



Employees

Co-workers of employees struggling with substances take on additional responsibilities at work to accommodate the increases in presenteeism (present but not productive) and absenteeism. Co-workers overcompensate by working longer hours to cover employees struggling with substance use which can result in burnout.

Commonly Misused Substances at Work

- Alcohol: used by about 90% of Americans
- Marijuana: 9% of marijuana users will become addicted
- Opioids: 80% of workers' comp claims involve opioid addiction
- Tobacco:
 - Nicotine is one of the most highly addictive substances
 - Employees who smoke cost about \$6,000 more per year in healthcare costs and \$4,000 per year in lost productivity

Signs and Symptoms of Workplace Impairment

Physical:

Rapid shift in physical appearance, tremors, unsteady gait, lack of coordination, delayed reaction time, smell of alcohol or drugs, lack of energy, loss of consciousness

Performance:

Frequently calling out sick, unexplained tardiness, early departure, extended breaks, errors in judgement, decreased concentration, deterioration in quality of work

Cognitive:

Inappropriate verbal or emotional responses, irritability, memory loss, inappropriate or abnormal behavior, isolation, inability to concentrate, confusion, forgetfulness, easily distracted

No one cares how much you
know until they know how
much you care.

Setting the Right Attitude

- No matter what the message is, it's the way you say it
- You won't have a productive conversation if you have negative pre-conceived notions of substance use
- Don't anticipate that the person's response will be angry, aggressive, or violent
 - If you go about it in the right way – that you're providing them information, not judgement – they are more likely to be receptive



Principles to Have a Productive Conversation

- Don't lecture: It's not your job to change their attitude toward substances
- Pick your moment:
 - Separate it from any disciplinary action
 - Have the conversation towards the end of the day
 - Ask them if it's ok to have an off-the-record conversation
- Stick to the facts:
 - Don't say: "You need to go to rehab," or "I noticed you've been drinking a lot."
 - Do say: "The company is trying to change the way it handles employee substance use, and we have these resources..."
- Keep it brief: You don't have to have a solution for them. Talk to them from a place of caring and point them to available resources.

Mental Health in the Workplace

Defining the Problem – General Statistics

- **1 in 5 Americans** will experience a mental health challenge at some point in their lifetime (CDC)
- **Fewer than 50%** of adults get help for their mental health-related challenge (NIMH)
- **81% of employees** report that workplace stress directly affects their mental health (Mental Health America)



Defining the Problem – Construction Industry

14%

of construction workers have a substance use disorder

20%

of American men who die by suicide work in the construction industry

15%

of all workplace overdose deaths are in construction despite representing only 7% of the workforce

80%

of construction workers have experienced stress at work

Key Signs of a Mental Health Challenge



Behaviors:

Coming in late, leaving early, arguing, disengaged, canceling, withdrawing, heightened use of substances, risk taking



Appearance:

Disheveled clothing, unkept, looking exhausted



Feelings:

Worrying excessively, sad, irritated, no longer interested in hobbies, hopelessness, lost sense of purpose



Thoughts:

Concentration issues, being very indecisive, self-blame or criticism, thinking there is no solution

Risk Factors for Suicide

Individual/ Personal Level

- Previous suicidal behavior
- Gender (male)
- Mental illness
- Chronic pain or illness
- Immobility
- Alcohol or other substance abuse
- Low self-esteem
- Low sense of control over life circumstances
- Lack of meaning and purpose in life
- Poor coping skills
- Hopelessness
- Guilt and shame
- Feeling like a burden

Social Level

- Abuse and violence
- Social isolation
- Family dispute, conflict, and dysfunction
- Separation
- Bereavement
- Significant loss
- Peer rejection
- Imprisonment
- Poor communication skills
- Family history of suicide or mental illness

Contextual/Life Environment

- Access to lethal means
- Unemployment, economic insecurity
- Financial stress
- Neighborhood violence and crime
- Poverty
- School failure
- Social or cultural discrimination
- Homelessness
- Exposure to environmental stressors
- Lack of social support services
- Geographical isolation

Source: Tennessee Department of Mental Health

Warning Indicators for Suicide

Behavioral

- Talking about suicide
- Making a suicide plan
- Self-harming behavior
- Prior suicide attempt
- Finalizing affairs
- Unexplained crying
- Sense of hopelessness
- Feeling trapped
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Ceasing activities that used to be important
- Giving away valued possessions
- Increased alcohol and/or drug use
- Uncharacteristic or impaired judgement or behavior (e.g., risk taking)

Physical

- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society
- Ceasing activities that used to be important
- Giving away valued possessions
- Increased alcohol and/or drug use
- Uncharacteristic or impaired judgement or behavior

Approaching a Co-Worker

Before the Conversation

1. Know what types of support and resources you have available
 - Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) or other benefits through work
 - 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (<https://988lifeline.org/>)
 - *Psychology Today's* “Find a Therapist” Tool (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>)
 - Youturn Health
2. Make sure you have the time to have this conversation.
 - If you are distracted or on your way to another meeting, it will not come across as authentic
3. Pick the time and place
 - Somewhere private and separate from any other meetings/disciplinary action

Approaching a Co-Worker

During the Conversation

1. Stick to the facts

- Tell them you're checking in because you care about them
- Do not accuse them or tell them they have to get help
- Don't debate them, just listen
- Start by saying something like "I noticed you haven't been yourself lately, and I just wanted to check in because I care about you. How's everything going?"

2. Share available resources

- Tell them how to access them, what they do, and which ones are confidential
- If appropriate, offer to help them or stay with them while they contact one of the resources
- It's okay if they decline resources.

3. Ask them if it's okay to check in with them

- "Is it okay if I check in with you next Wednesday at 2:00? It will only be a few minutes, it's just to see how things are going."

Approaching a Co-Worker *After the Conversation*

1. Check in if you said you would. It shows you care and that you're not just checking a box.





JHL's CULTURE OF CARE
Recovery Friendly Workplace



Disclaimer

The information provided in this training is for general educational purposes only and does not substitute for professional mental health or substance use advice. If you believe you or another individual is suffering a mental health crisis, substance use disorder, or other medical emergency, contact 911.

This training is for the convenience of AGC members and should not be relied upon as advice or guidance. We recommend reaching out to a qualified mental health professional or substance use counselor before acting on or using this information. AGC, JHL Constructors, and our associated trainers are not liable for risks or issues associated with using or acting upon the information provided.

Definitions

- **Substance Use:** A reasonable ingestion of a substance such as alcohol or prescription medication, for a clearly defined beneficial purpose, that is regulated by that purpose
- **Problematic Substance Use:** Inappropriate use of a substance, such as alcohol, use of an illegal drug, or misuse of a prescription medication or over the counter medicine
- **Substance Use Disorder:** The clinical term used to diagnose recurrent use of alcohol and/or other substances that leads to a spectrum of harmful consequences, including impairment, health problems, and/or failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home.
- **Addiction:** The common term used when substance use or other behaviors (gambling, eating, shopping, sex, etc.) become compulsive, uncontrolled, and continue despite negative consequences. Related to substance use, "addiction" is clinically considered a "severe substance use disorder" and is a disorder that can be treated/managed effectively.
- **Treatment:** Education, counseling, structured treatment programs, and recovery programs designed to overcome alcohol or substance misuse or a disorder
- **Recovery:** A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential.

What is a Recovery Friendly Workplace?

Culture of Care

- Total Worker Health – Mental Health is a Safety Issue
- Return on investment – priceless

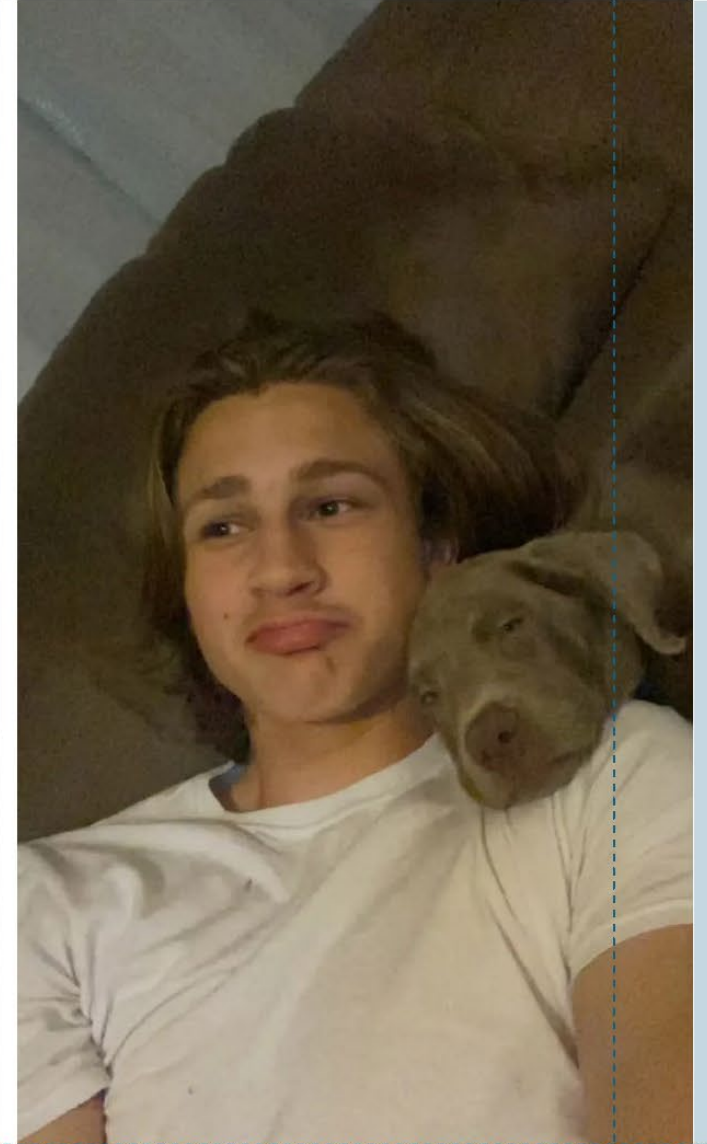
Skills and Traits of Individuals in Recovery

- Reliability
- Resilience
- Attention to Detail
- Safety Consciousness
- Teamwork
- Problem Solving Skills

Why I am so Passionate?

**Construction, Substance Use
Disorder & Suicide – all my life**

**Saving of one life makes it
worth it.**



Success Story – Grayson Long

- 6 Years Sober –
03/15/2024
- JHL First Employer to
support his battle with
Substance Use Disorder
- Paying it forward





“

I met Grayson early in his career when he joined JHL prior to his sobriety. To see this young man, make the decision to get help and change his life at such a young age proves his true character of courage. To have Grayson work with me in my current job and see he has been promoted showcases his intelligence, his positive energy in a tough industry shows his motivation and persistence. I love this kid!

Omar Felix

Superintendent

“

I am so proud of how Grayson turned his life around and how far he has come since then. He has developed himself into one of our true bright young leaders.

Cory Jackson

Vice President of Field Operations





“

We gladly offered the support he needed, recognizing the courage it took to seek help. Grayson’s journey since then has been a joy to witness, as he has flourished both professionally and personally. Working with Grayson is awesome, and each interaction is a celebration of his remarkable growth. As he continues his successful path, we eagerly anticipate the bright future that lies ahead for him.

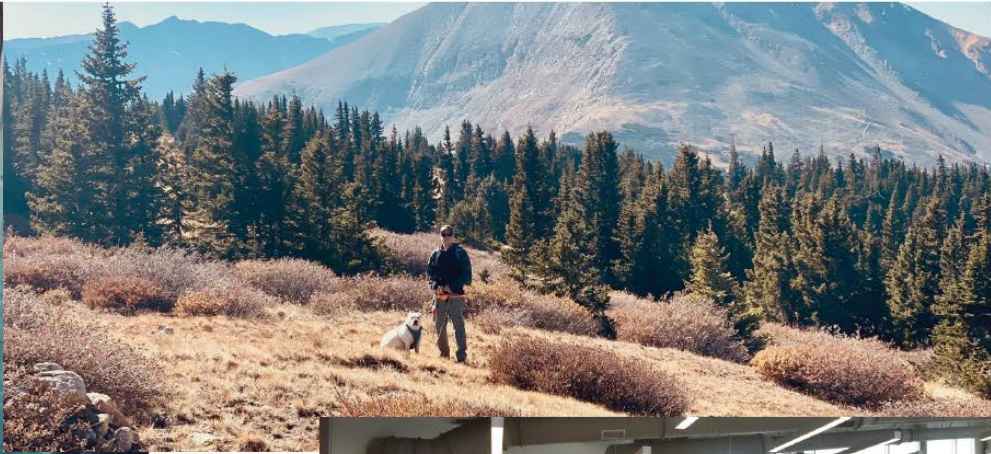
Sarah Steller

Director of Culture

Resources

- AGC Colorado Mental Health Working Group website
<https://www.agccolorado.org/mental-health-working-group>
- DOL Recovery- Ready Workplace Resource Hub
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/RRW-hub>

Recovery Friendly Workplace = Culture of Care Success



For More on Youturn Health



Q & A

Richard Jones
Chief Clinical Officer
Youturn Health
rjones@youturnhealth.com

Heather Strong Gutierrez
Safety Manager
JHL Constructors
hstrong@jhlconstructors.com