

Building a Recovery-Friendly Workplace: A Business Guide

The opioid crisis affects every corner of American society, including your workplace. The statistics paint a clear picture:

- Opioid misuse has impacted **75% of employers** nationwide¹
- Nearly **75% of American adults with opioid use disorder are in the workforce**²
- **80% of HR decision-makers** believe substance use disorder (SUD) impacts their employees, yet only **25%** feel prepared to deal with the issue
- Employees with untreated SUD miss around **50% more work days** than their colleagues²
- Healthcare costs at high-pressure work environments are **50% higher** than at supportive companies⁷

Investing in an Employee's Recovery Saves You Money

- Employees in recovery take **5 fewer sick days** per year than those not in recovery
- Each dollar spent on treatment saves **\$4 in healthcare costs** and **\$7 in law enforcement costs**
- Workers who receive SUD treatment save employers an average of **\$3,200 annually**
- Employees in recovery save around **\$500 annually** in health plan costs compared to those with untreated SUD

Sources

1. [CDC](#)
2. [Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit](#): Connecticut Department of Labor
3. [National Safety Council](#)



Evidence-Based Actions You Can Take

1. Create Recovery-Friendly Workplace Policies

- **Transform your hiring and employment** practices to remove unnecessary barriers while maintaining safety standards.
- **Remove barriers to employment:** Avoid blanket policies that exclude people with addiction history
- **Implement reasonable accommodations:** Allow flexible scheduling for treatment appointments
- **Focus on current job performance** rather than past addiction history

2. Provide Employee Education and Training

Education reduces stigma and creates a more supportive workplace culture.

- **Host stigma reduction workshops** for managers and staff
- **Share accurate information** about addiction as a medical condition, not a moral failing
- **Train supervisors** on how to support employees in recovery appropriately

3. Use Person-First Language

Language matters. Simple word choices can reduce stigma and create a more inclusive environment.

Replace harmful terms:

- Say “person with substance use disorder” instead of “addict,” “junkie,” or “druggie”
- Say “drug use” or “substance misuse” instead of “drug abuse”
- Say “using” or “actively using” instead of “dirty”
- Say “in recovery” or “substance-free” instead of “clean”
- Refer to medication-assisted treatment as a recovery tool rather than a crutch

4. Support Community Recovery Resources

Build connections that benefit both your business and the broader community.

- **Partner with local treatment centers** for employee referrals
- **Sponsor recovery-focused** community events
- **Advertise job openings** at recovery centers

Interested in learning more? Visit RecoveryWorksCT.org to find out how to become a certified Recovery Friendly Workplace. There are free local resources and support to guide you through the process.