



Many of us have been affected by problematic substance use or abuse in our lives, whether we experience it through the struggles of our family members and friends or we personally struggle with it in our own lives. According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, 1 in 12 adults suffer from alcoholism or alcohol dependence, and the opioid use has become epidemic in Western New York and the Southern Tier. These increasing patterns of substance abuse are impacting many of us and presenting immense challenges in many aspects of our lives.

While there are policies in place in each organization that help bring attention to substance abuse, in order to keep employees safe, struggling with an addiction can make it difficult to always comply with these policies. This month, we spoke with Megan Andrews, C&FS EAP's Clinical Supervisor, about what you need to know about substance abuse and what you can do if you're dealing with substance abuse yourself or if you know of someone in your workplace who is dealing with substance abuse.

Turn to your EAP

"It is important for the individual that is struggling with a use and abuse problem to remember that there are people out there who care about their health and who will support them," Andrews says. "There is a lot of support available, and accessing that support is essential in helping someone achieve whatever the goal is for recovery, whether it is abstinence or looking to cut back." If you or a co-worker is struggling with substance abuse, there are many resources

out there that can help better maintain a job and important relationships outside of work.

Thankfully, you don't need to memorize what these resources are or know how to refer to them. "If an individual calls EAP, our counselors can talk with them about what resources there are in the community, establish goals, and talk through treatment options," Andrews says. "We can get them headed in the right direction."

Call EAP at (716) 681-4300 to talk with a counselor and get the support you need.

Take substance abuse seriously

If you do observe a co-worker who is stumbling, has slurred speech, or is acting out of their normal character, these may be indicators of being under the influence. In this situation, it is not your responsibility to confront the employee under the influence. "Especially if you are not necessarily close with the co-worker, if you feel as though it would not be safe for you to speak with them, or if you don't feel comfortable doing so, it is better to take your concerns directly to a supervisor," Andrews suggests. "If the matter is urgent, talk to the supervisor immediately. They can address the situation and the employee can be connected to EAP services or other substance abuse resources." If you are under the influence yourself, think about the consequences and safety concerns if you go to work. Miss the day and call EAP to get help so that you can avoid continued absence in the future.

While Andrews acknowledges that friendship or mutual respect may make it difficult to "see something and say something," the reality is that they are not only violating your workplace Use and Abuse policy, they are potentially creating safety hazards for your other co-workers and causing damage to the organization. Be aware of your organization's policy, as you can even be held accountable for certain actions if you do observe policy violations. "When you know what isn't allowed, you can make the best decisions about your own actions, and you can feel confident knowing when someone else may be breaking policy or when an intervention is necessary," Andrews advises.