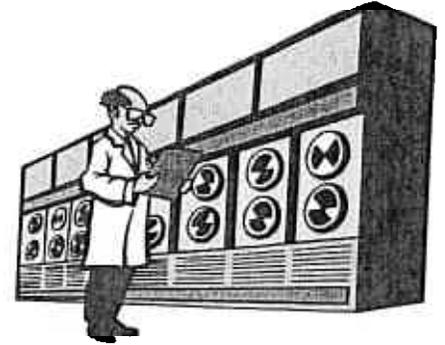


# Workplace Substance Abuse - Did You Know?

## *Incidence of Substance Abuse in the Workplace*

- ◆ Eight percent of full-time workers employed as adults are current users of illicit drugs. (1)
- ◆ The rate of illicit drug use among full-time workers is higher for:
  - Construction workers - 16%
  - Food preparation, waitstaff, and bartenders - 11%
  - Handlers, helpers, or laborers - 11%
  - Machine operators or inspectors - 11% (1)
- ◆ About 8% of the workforce are heavy drinkers, with significantly higher rates among:
  - Construction workers - 17.6%
  - Food preparation, waitstaff, and bartenders - 12%
  - Handlers, helpers, or laborers - 16%
  - Machine operators or inspectors - 14% (1)
- ◆ Seventeen percent of employees surveyed across five different work sites reported situations that imply prescription drug misuse. (2)
- ◆ Small businesses are more likely to have problems with illicit drugs. (3)
  - Employees in companies with fewer than 25 employees are twice as likely to use illicit drugs as employees in larger companies.
  - Illicit drug use among employees is linked to a lack of workplace drug policies; illicit drug users were less likely than employees from large establishments to report that their employer provided information, had written policies, or provided access to an employee assistance program (EAP).
- ◆ Fifteen percent of illicit drug users and 6% of heavy alcohol users report that they had gone to work high or a little drunk in the past year. (4)
- ◆ Seventy-five percent of people calling a cocaine hotline said they sometimes used cocaine on the job; 25% said they took cocaine on the job daily. (5)
- ◆ Drug-using employees at GM average 40 days of sick leave each year, compared with 4.5 days for nonusers.
- ◆ Employees testing positive on pre-employment drug tests at Utah Power & Light were five times more likely to be involved in a workplace accident than those who tested negative.
- ◆ The State of Wisconsin estimates that expenses and losses related to substance abuse average 25% of the salary of each worker affected.



## *Cost to Employers of Employees with a Diagnosed Chemical Dependency Problem*

- ◆ Alcoholism causes 500 million lost workdays each year (6)
- ◆ Alcoholics are expensive to businesses in several different ways:
  - Workplace accident rates are two or three times higher than normal;
  - Alcoholics are five times more likely to file a worker's compensation claim; and
  - Alcoholics are 2.5 times more likely to have absences of eight days or more. (5)
- ◆ Employees diagnosed with a chemical dependency problem in a large manufacturing plant were found to have:
  - Six times the number of absences;
  - Seven times the number of days missed from work; and
  - Higher incidence of injuries, hypertension, and mental disorders. (7)

# The Role of the Union Steward in the EAP Process

by Ying Gee, CEAP

*Helping workers and their families with health, personal, and financial problems is the oldest collective activity of the American labor movement. The tradition of workers helping each other is still important to American's unions. Humanitarianism remains a major part of labor's agenda.*

**U**nion stewards play an integral role in the EAP referral process because they are in direct contact with the workers. A union steward is, first and foremost, a friend or a peer of the worker. The union steward is usually the first person the worker turns to if he or she has a problem. The steward is someone the worker can associate with and trust. Union stewards are a part of the worker's work life, family, and community. Union stewards are usually the first to recognize and know when a coworker is in pain or in need. Therefore, in the EAP process, union stewards can play an active role in the early identification, intervention, and referral process.

Union stewards are responsible for ensuring that the contractual rights of union members are not violated. In most cases, the worker can request union representation during his or her disciplinary hearing. In the hearing, the union steward will review the disciplinary process to determine whether or not the worker's contractual rights have been violated. If so, the steward will use the grievance procedure to address the violation. The work record or the number of formal disciplines issued in the past may be indicators that the worker is experiencing a work and/or personal difficulty. The steward will use the constructive confrontation approach to encourage the worker to seek voluntary help through the EAP before that person's work record can deteriorate further.

The effectiveness of an EAP is, to some degree, determined by the amount of support and utilization given by union and management of the program. That support and utilization require both union and management to have a clear understanding of their role in the EAP process. All involved must realize that inappropriate management actions may lead to further substandard performance. The EAP can clarify the roles by providing joint EAP training to union and management leaders. The training should provide an opportunity for both union and management to understand and agree that employee assistance is a key mechanism for maintaining a healthy and productive workforce.

Research shows there is a greater probability that the client will relapse, when he/she, upon completion of the treatment process, is returned back to the same dysfunc-

tional worksite and/or community systems. The union steward can assist EA professionals in:

- reducing the relapse rate by making certain that the worker is given the opportunity, in keeping with contractual provisions, to request reasonable return-to-work accommodation;
- identifying and reducing environmental and dysfunctional factors;
- identifying support and resources that will help workers readjust to the workplace and community.

In addition, the union representative can serve as a liaison between the worker and the community resources. Ergo, the union representative working in conjunction with the EAP can bring about corporate and institutional changes in policies and systems that are more favorable to the workers.

## The Role of Union Steward in the EAP Process

- To listen carefully to members who need help.
- To assist a member who has a question or problem by connecting that member with the EAP.
- To give information by explaining the EAP services available to help the member with the problem.
- To empower by helping members take charge of their course of action.
- To refer the member to the EAP when work-related and/or personal problems become evident. 



*Ying Gee, Ed.D., CEAP, is International Representative for the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America in Detroit, Michigan. For further information, call her at 313-926-5513.*

Continued from page 12

managed care. Because of the announcement, the *Washington Post* reported in mid-November, "investors unloaded shares of national HMOs...erasing \$12 billion in stock value in a single day." The *Post* noted "the companies have since regained some, though hardly all, of those losses."

The *Post* added that one lawyer working on the HMO litigation—Mississippi's Richard Scruggs, best known for his assault on the tobacco industry—has been meeting with key HMO analysts on Wall Street. The pummeling of its stock was seen as a big factor motivating American Home Products Corp. into a \$3.75 billion out-of-court settlement with users of the fen-phen diet pill combo, the *Post* observed.

Aetna has dismissed the RICO allegations as "outrageous," while other managed care organizations would not comment. A Supreme Court ruling earlier this year in *Humana vs. Forsyth* allowed private actions against

health insurers under RICO, with its provision for triple damages. HMOs got better news in September, when a federal district court judge in Philadelphia dismissed a RICO class action, *Maio vs. Aetna*, that alleged all six million enrollees in Aetna HMOs were victims of a "fraudulent scheme." The victory did not come without a little pain, however, as U.S. District Judge John P. Fullam reasoned that the HMO's advertised claim to provide "quality care" constituted "puffery," not a promise that could serve as the foundation of a claim of fraud.

Nevertheless, "the dismissal in *Maio vs. Aetna* is a much-needed dose of reality for those who believed, erroneously, that the Supreme Court's *Humana* decision opened the floodgates for RICO suits against managed care companies," according to Stephanie Kanwit, an attorney with the Washington Legal Foundation. She lauds Fullam for noting that any dissatisfaction with HMOs "is more appropriately directed to the legislatures and regulatory bodies of the several states" than to the court system.

## Domestic abuse follows women to work

**D**omestic violence begins at home, but its impact is far-reaching. One-half of employed, abused women missed three days of work per month, 64 percent were late, and 75 percent used company time to deal with court appearances and other violence issues, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The National Safe Workplace Institute found 96 percent of abuse victims experienced work problems. A recent study by Wayne Burton, MD, and Daniel Conti, PhD, of Bank One in Chicago (See November's *B&H*.) found that exposure to violence can increase unproductive time on the job by 40 percent, on average.

What's more, domestic abuse can literally spill over into the workplace. Most corporate safety and security directors surveyed by NSWI ranked domestic violence as a high security problem.

Beth Lindamood, a workplace violence expert with Ohio Casualty Group, in Hamilton, says, "Women who are victims of violent workplace crimes are twice as likely as men to know their attackers" and "can experience everything from harassment, threatening phone calls and e-mails, to stalking and violent confrontations." Coworkers can be affected as well, especially if they have to stop an altercation or witness an act of violence.

Lindamood recommends a zero-tolerance policy against workplace violence. Workers should be advised to report threats to a supervisor or confidential toll-free hotline. Employers should work with law enforcement officials, particularly if there is a restraining order, which should be on file. They should also allow time off for court appearances.

If a threat is reported, employers should develop a contingency plan, including:

- Moving the threatened employee's desk to a new location,
- Providing photos of the stalker to receptionists and security,
- Changing the employee's work schedule,
- Having the security guard walk the victim to her car,
- Advising the victim to save voice mail messages from the abuser,
- Referring the victim to community resources.

## The public-private spending disconnect

**I**n November the feds announced that Medicare spending fell 1 percent for fiscal year 1999, the first decline in the program's 33-year history and a turnaround from recent annual increases of as much as 10 percent.

That's a stark contrast to the private sector. Hewitt Associates reports a 7.8 percent increase in health benefits costs at large firms this year. Most recently the annual Deloitte & Touche/*Business & Health* Employer Survey on Managed Care found an average HMO rate increase of 8.7 percent. (See the article on page 28.)

The Congressional Budget Office in July linked slowing Medicare spending to reduced payments to home health agencies and to federal fraud-busting efforts.

**Q:** What tactics are cutting disability costs?

**A:** See *Data Watch* on page 48.

HOME  
INDEX  
SEARCH  
ARCHIVES  
washingtonpost



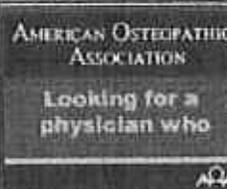
Some STATES are LETTING the TOBACCO COMPANIES GET AWAY with MURDER.  
Which side is YOUR state on?



NEWS STYLE SPORTS CLASSIFIEDS MARKETPLACE  
PRINT EDITION TOP NEWS WORLD NATION POLITICS METRO BUSINESS & TECH HEALTH OPINION WEATHER

Marketplace  
HP Black Photo Cartridge \$23.24  
Office  
Enhance Your Creative and Intuitive Skills  
AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION  
Looking for a physician who





## Most Drug Users Are Full-Time Workers

The Associated Press  
Thursday, September 9, 1999; Page A7

Seventy percent of all people who abuse drugs work full time, a U.S. government report released yesterday shows – contradicting the image of drug users as people on the fringe of society.

The report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) shows that 80 percent of all people who abuse alcohol work full time. It also shows that 7.7 percent of full-time workers age 18 to 49 admit to having used illicit drugs in the past month. And there are 6.2 million who abuse alcohol.

For the report, SAMHSA interviewed more than 24,000 people in 1997 and concentrated on the 7,000 who were 18 to 49 and worked full time. They compared their findings with those of a similar survey done in 1994.

They also found that workplace drug testing is on the increase – 44 percent of those surveyed in 1994 said their employers had some sort of drug test at hiring, and 49 percent said so in 1997.

© 1999 The Washington Post Company

[Back to the top](#)

washingtonpost NEWS STYLE SPORTS CLASSIFIEDS MARKETPLACE  
PRINT EDITION TOP NEWS WORLD NATION POLITICS METRO BUSINESS & TECH HEALTH OPINION WEATHER



## Special Feature

### Threat Management Strategies To Prevent Workplace Tragedies

*Workplace violence expert and lecturer Mark Lipe of HR Solutions thinks that acts of dangerous aggression on the part of employees generally come with warning signs that managers need to be aware of and handle effectively. The following article, a special contribution to Workplace Violence Report from Lipe, addresses that issue with helpful suggestions for managers.*

In the wake of a shootout in March at a Colorado Department of Transportation office, I would offer business owners, managers and supervisors an urgent message: Don't ignore aggressive workplace behavior.

In almost every case on record people who attack others at work begin telegraphing their psychological distress months, sometimes years before the final, tragic explosion. The March disciplinary hearing between transportation department administrators and employee Robert Helfer was a "threat gateway" during which the accountant-turned-gunman likely confirmed inner fears that his world was crumbling.

There are ways to estimate the potential for this behavior. A review of Helfer's personnel records reflects that he filed complaint after complaint about department rules, raged at co-workers and personalized mundane office disagreements.

Long before bringing a gun to the office, Helfer bullied co-workers and played the office victim, a behavioral pairing that indicates a volatile situation is brewing. If both happen together – if the person has a perceived history of injustice, demonstrated by constantly filing complaints and lawsuits – and then that person makes a threat, he or she should go right to the top of the serious threat list.

People who exhibit these behaviors often believe that workplace problems are not their fault. They often feel that they have been trying to go by the rules, but it has not worked, so eventually they believe that they have to take matters into their own hands. Helfer's work record is a classic SOS from someone in trouble.

The biggest misstep employers make when dealing with problem employees is putting off dis-

ciplinary action or termination. Although I do not know all the details of Helfer's background, it is rather obvious that Transportation Department administrators likely should have handled Helfer's inappropriate behavior differently, and taken decisive action sooner.

They waited too long. As a consultant I've seen this happen in numerous cases. Companies tolerate yelling, screaming, storming out, door-slammings and abusive language far longer than they should. These behaviors create a toxic corporate culture that hurts productivity and erodes confidence in management.

#### What Can Employers Do?

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and managerial experience certainly bears out the fact that creating conditions that prevent the development of problem employees is a lot smarter course of action than trying to deal with the problem employee later on.

One way in which businesses can reduce the threat of workplace violence is by screening people during the job selection process. Most "problem employees" were hired, not made. Although it is sometimes difficult to identify the behavior of those who are prone to violence, many of them tend to exhibit specific types of behavior. Some of these include:

**Belligerence:** Walking around with a chip on one's shoulder, ready to argue or quarrel with others at the slightest excuse.

**Excessive moodiness:** Spells of blues, or feeling down in the dumps a great deal of the time.

**Exaggerated worry:** Continuous anxiety about small matters that are blown entirely out of proportion.

**Suspiciousness and mistrust:** A persistent feeling that the world is full of dishonest, conniving people who are trying to take advantage of them.

**Helplessness and dependency:** A tendency to let others carry the burden, while exhibiting problems making decisions.

**Poor emotional control:** Exaggerated emotional outbursts that are inappropriate or out of proportion to the cause.

**Daydreaming and fantasizing:** Spending a good part of the day imagining how things could be, rather than dealing with them the way they are.

*(Continued)*

**Special Report (cont.)**

**Hypochondria:** Worrying a great deal of the time about minor physical ailments and/or experiencing imaginary symptoms of illness.

These behaviors are often very costly to employers. They can result in substandard production, poor morale, excessive labor problems, unnecessarily high labor turnover and excessive absenteeism. The behaviors will also affect other employees who do not want to be around these individuals and who find that they cannot get their work done efficiently because of the environment that is created by the emotional problems of these individuals.

Many companies are now developing a variety of programs to help them deal with this issue. One of the most effective approaches is to train management and supervisory personnel in how to handle people exhibiting aberrant behaviors or attitudes. For example, some steps that managers can take include:

1. Avoid an audience. This makes the individual feel special and will avoid agitating others who may be angry.
2. If possible, have a second employee in the room during a coaching session. This gives you a witness to what occurs and it may deter an attack.
3. Establish the dispute boundaries. Initially, ignore any comments that are not related to the problem.
4. Listen patiently, attentively, and actively to all parties to the conflict.
5. Speak slowly, softly, and clearly. Slow down your speech to reduce anxiety. The other person will usually mirror your pace.
6. Focus on behaviors not personalities.
7. Make eye contact and give the angry person your full attention.
8. Specify acceptable behaviors and, if possible, involve the conflicting parties in the problem resolutions.

*For more information, contact: Mark Lipe of HR Solutions at (217) 725-7570.*

**Illinois State Police Push Employers To Prepare for Workplace Violence**

The Illinois State Police Division of Internal Investigations is pushing employers to take action to ensure their workplaces are secure and safe environments for their employees.

Why go to all that trouble? The Illinois Police list five key reasons:

- The expense associated with loss of business and productivity.
- Employees' refusal to continue to accept past abusive behaviors.
- Acts of violence becoming too commonplace.
- Escalating workplace pressures through layoff and increased workload.
- It's the right thing to do.

When a violent act occurs, the state police urge employers to document the incident carefully to assist law enforcement in addressing the crime.

The Illinois force recommends that employers document the incident promptly while their memories of the events are still fresh. Documentation should include the date, time and location of the incidents and the action taken or behavior exhibited. Employers also must be sure to indicate how they responded to the action, whether from an outsider or an employee. Finally, indicate how the employee, customer or stranger reacted to your efforts to modify behavior, the Illinois State Police recommend.

*For more information, contact: the Illinois State Police Division of Internal Investigations (217) 785-4376.*

END

**WORKPLACE VIOLENCE REPORT**

8737 Colesville Road, 11<sup>th</sup> Fl., Silver Spring, MD 20910

*Use this coupon to subscribe or to renew your subscription!*

YES, sign me up for a new subscription! \$297

Payment enclosed. (Prices include shipping and handling. Maryland residents please add 5% sales tax.)

Charge my  VISA  AMEX or  MasterCard

Card No. \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (required) \_\_\_\_\_

Bill my organization

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

 **For fastest service:**

Phone your order to: (800) 274-6737

In DC metro area: (301) 589-5103

or FAX to: (301) 589-8493