

# Substance Abuse and the Workplace Program

## Office of Substance Abuse

### Maine Department of Health and Human Services

#### The Issue:

- ❑ In 2005, the estimated cost of lost productivity due to alcohol and drug abuse in Maine was \$155.6 million, which represented 17% of the total cost of substance abuse<sup>i</sup>.
- ❑ George Washington University – Ensuring Solutions Alcohol Cost Calculator estimates the annual cost for missed work days for a Maine mining/construction company with 50 employees due to alcohol abuse to be approximately \$17,800.<sup>ii</sup>
- ❑ Of the national estimate of 19.3 million current illicit drug users aged 18 or older in 2009, 12.9 million (66.6 percent) were employed either full or part time<sup>iii</sup>
- ❑ The consequences of heavy drinking are pervasive: 20 percent of workers say they have been injured, have had to cover for a coworker, or needed to work harder because of coworkers' drinking.<sup>iv</sup>



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The Substance Abuse and the Workplace Program (SAW) works collaboratively with the Dept. of Labor and other stakeholders to address the effects of substance abuse on the workplace, and develop strategies to increase the effectiveness of Drug-Free Workplace Programs (DFWP) in Maine.

#### Program Goals:

- ❑ To reduce the cost of doing business in Maine due to lost productivity increased health care and insurance costs, and crime.
- ❑ To reduce workplace accidents, death, injury, disability and health care costs due to substance abuse.
- ❑ To reduce employee substance use and stress.
- ❑ To improve responsible attitudes towards drinking and social support for drinking reduction; increase employee knowledge and use of healthier stress reduction techniques; and enhance help-seeking behaviors by encouraging the use of employee assistance programs or community service providers.

#### Priority Populations:

Employees (18-34 years old) and employers of Maine businesses with less than 50 employees.

#### Program Activities:

- ❑ Assess and monitor substance abuse trends and issues that affect the Maine workforce.
- ❑ Develop, implement and maintain resource materials, trainings and technical assistance for employees and employers to help them create a safe working environment through the implementation of a comprehensive Drug Free Workplace Program.
- ❑ Implement and maintain a substance abuse and the workplace component for the online "Healthy Maine Works" employer tool resulting in recommendations for cost-effective strategies for a healthier workplace (in collaboration with the Maine Cardiovascular Health Program).
- ❑ Promote and support drug-free workplace policy adoption through the WorkAlert campaign.

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**Substance Abuse and the Workplace Program**  
**Office of Substance Abuse**  
**Maine Department of Health and Human Services**

**Program Activities 2009-2010:**

- ❑ Collaborated with Maine Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division to develop an online drug testing policy builder. This tool will expedite the approval process for drug testing policies and promote the implementation of a comprehensive drug-free workplace program.
- ❑ Continued collaboration with the Maine Cardiovascular Health Program, Maine CDC, to improve the function and ease of use of Healthy Maine Works, an online worksite assessment and wellness program guide which integrates substance abuse prevention with health and wellness programs.
- ❑ Continued the WorkAlert media campaign to raise awareness of the need for Drug Free Workplace Programs and link employers to on line substance abuse policy building tools. WorkAlert website: [www.maine.gov/workalert](http://www.maine.gov/workalert)
- ❑ Provided group presentations and training about substance abuse in the workplace to organizations such as Maine Conversation Corp., and the Maine Chamber Trust Group.
- ❑ Provided technical assistance to Healthy Maine Partnerships regarding comprehensive Drug-Free Workplace programs.
- ❑ Researched and obtained educational materials addressing substance abuse and the workplace issues to support informational needs of businesses which were distributed through OSA's Information and Resource Center.

<sup>i</sup> The Maine Office of Substance Abuse. The Cost of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Maine, 2005: Executive Summary. P 3.

<sup>ii</sup> Ensuring Solutions. The Alcohol Cost Calculator.

<http://www.alcoholcostcalculator.org/alcohol/index.php?population=50&employed=1&state=Maine&industry=Mining%2FConstruction&page=2>

<sup>iii</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). *Results from the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Volume I. Summary of National Findings* (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-38A, HHS Publication No. SMA 10-4586Findings). Rockville, MD.

<sup>iv</sup> Mangione, T.W., et al. (1998). *New Perspectives for Worksite Alcohol Strategies: Results from a Corporate Drinking Study*. Boston, MA: JSI Research and Training Institute