WORKPLACE RULES, CULTURE AND WORKLOAD

On the Job in Recovery

There are written and unwritten, spoken and unspoken, and concrete and intangible elements that come into play as you navigate your recovery at work. Understanding and using them effectively can impact your long-term results. The three essential elements you'll need to learn, master, and know how to maneuver in your workplace include

1. The company structure – including requirements, workplace policies and benefits
2. The company culture and its impact on employees
3. Your own schedule and workload

Below are considerations for each of these areas and questions to ask yourself as you work to learn more about your workplace.

1. Company Structure

HR Policies & Benefits
Best practice is to balance your needs with employer needs by learning and understanding company practices and policies related to

- Flexible scheduling – for example, starting your workday earlier or taking a late lunch to accommodate a support group meeting.
- Working remotely – either part or fulltime..
- Paid time off (PTO) – which may include vacation, personal and sick time, and floating holidays. Know what's available to you and be aware of any requirements for making your request.
- Short-term disability benefits (STD) – may be an option in the event of a reoccurrence of symptoms requiring time-off for treatment. Know your company's policy, as there might be requirements and specific steps necessary for eligibility.
- Unpaid leave – which could be used for emergency situations. Discuss with your employer as soon as possible to help your team plan and adjust to your absence.

Company Drug-Free Workplace (DFWP) Policy/Program
Does your company have a drug and alcohol policy and program? It may include elements that specifically support your successful recovery journey. For example:

- Follow-up testing -- This type of testing may be required for a specific period if there were prior violations of the company's DFWP – like testing positive and returning to work after an assessment/treatment.

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- Use of a Medical Review Office (MRO) - An MRO provides confidential analysis of a positive drug test result in case there is a legal, verifiable reason for the test result. In the event the lab finds a prohibited drug in a person's system, the MRO will contact the employee to request a legitimate medical explanation for the positive test (i.e., appropriate use of a prescription medication). If the employee can provide proof, the MRO will report the final test result as negative to the employer.

- Support for employees who *voluntarily* ask for help - If you feel your recovery is in jeopardy or you experience symptoms of the disease, reach out for help as soon as possible. Be as honest as you see fit with your employer and take advantage of resources to get yourself back on track.

Insurance and Health and Wellness Options
Some employers offer an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP). EAPs provide a variety of recovery and behavioral support resources to prevent and manage challenging situations that could impact job performance, health, and mental/emotional wellbeing. EAP services are generally free to employees and often their family members, and include such things as

- Personalized coaching and counseling support
- Referrals to community support groups and other local resources
- Family and relationship counseling or coaching
- Financial and legal assistance
- Help finding child and elder care resources
- Many more in-person, online, and live chat health and wellness options

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
This requirement can offer workplace protections to people who

- are currently in a treatment program,
- have successfully *completed* treatment, and/or
- are in recovery.

The ADA provides for reasonable accommodation if it does not cause the employer undue hardship or expense. This may include setting up a work situation that minimizes emotional or environmental triggers and time to attend support group meetings, aftercare and counseling appointments and/or appointments required to navigate legal issues.

2. Company Culture & Impact

The job environment and company culture around alcohol and other drug use can do a lot to support or jeopardize your recovery-focused lifestyle. Ask friends and coworkers in various departments and use your own gauge to get a feel for company culture and workplace priorities. If you're job hunting, ask around and use online employer review sites to get a real sense of life on the job. Ask questions and do your homework.

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For example:

- Are company-sponsored social events, after-work activities and celebrations centered around alcohol use that could be a trigger and interfere with your sobriety? Many recovery-friendly employers opt for team and family focused activities, instead. That's a healthy sign!
- Does your company demonstrate support for life/work balance, which can be critical to your recovery? Consider the following:
    - Are their unspoken rewards given to employees who overwork and sanctions for those committed to strict schedules?
    - Are vacations encouraged or met with less enthusiasm?
    - Are routine breaks encouraged and are there opportunities for flexible schedules and working remotely?

How about sharing your story? While it can be empowering to tell your story, you might also be concerned about how it will be received and any stigma or pressure that the revelation may invite. Discuss your concerns and make the decision with someone you trust like your counselor, recovery coach or trusted family member or friend. And if you do decide to share, practice some comments you're comfortable with and what you'll say when questions are asked. With preparation, you can avoid being caught off guard and minimize a threatening situation.

3. Your Own Schedule and Workload

A final consideration is your ability to balance your recovery with work responsibilities. That's a personal journey that can change depending on the job and where you are in your recovery. Start by

- Managing your workload effectively.. It may require that you develop skills such as time management and prioritization to bring needed structure to your work and keep you on deadline.
- Monitor your workload and ask for help, when needed. The stress of falling behind could be a trigger, so:
    - Ask for help promptly to avoid making the problems worse.
    - Focus on facts and be specific about your needs.
    - Stay in control by managing the situation and being accountable for results.
    - If you're consistently overloaded, discuss the situation with your manager to see if you can renegotiate assignments.

Together Arkansas, including the course and these resource materials, has been developed to raise awareness with businesses about how to respond to the risks associated with the misuse of opioids and other drugs. The content is meant for educational purposes only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice or replacing the work needed to develop a responsible drug-free workplace policy and program. As such, it should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a legal professional or other competent advisor. If you have questions about this course or the information presented here, please reach out Contact@TogetherArkansas.com.

To view the other modules in this course, visit www.TogetherArkansas.com.

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