GROW
GEORGIA RECOVERY-READY WORKPLACE INITIATIVE

Addressing the Opioid Crisis through the Georgia Recovery-Ready Workplace Initiative

THE CHALLENGE

Substance Use and the Opioid Crisis in the Workplace

Substance use disorder (SUD), particularly opioid use disorder (OUD), has significantly impacted the American workforce. In Georgia alone, the economic cost of lost productivity due to OUD and fatal overdoses was estimated at $2.1 billion in 2017.[1] Nationally, 75% of employers report that their workplaces have been directly affected by the opioid crisis.[2]

KEY WORKPLACE-RELATED CONSEQUENCES OF UNTREATED SUD[3]

- Lost productivity (e.g., absenteeism, presenteeism)
- High turnover rates
- Increased healthcare costs
- Increased safety risks (e.g., workplace injuries)
- Negative impact on organizational culture

DID YOU KNOW...

The employment rate among adults with an active substance use disorder in the U.S. is 70.3% **(an estimated 13.6 million workers)** and 8.5% of the U.S. workforce **(an estimated 13.3 million workers)** report being in recovery from an alcohol or other drug problem?[4]

Employers have a unique opportunity to lead. By building a workplace culture that prioritizes wellness and encourages open communication, employers can reduce substance use issues, link employees to resources, support employees in recovery, and address addiction stigma.

THE SOLUTION

The GROW Initiative

The Georgia Recovery-Ready Workplace (GROW) Initiative, led by Georgia Southern University in partnership with the Georgia Council for Recovery and Augusta University, introduces an innovative approach to establishing Recovery Friendly Workplaces (RFWs) across Georgia.

Georgia is the ideal state to implement GROW:

- **#1 state for business 11 consecutive years**
- **Home to 18 Fortune 500 companies**
- **Strong recovery community**

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WHAT GROW OFFERS EMPLOYERS

- **Comprehensive Training** for executive and HR teams on workplace safety and prevention, understanding addiction and recovery science, building supportive systems in the workplace, changing workplace culture and policy to reduce stigma and enhance services, and overdose prevention education
- **Ongoing Technical Assistance**
- **Access to Toolkit and Website** with resources and guidance
- **Recognition as a Recovery Friendly Workplace**, enhancing corporate social responsibility
- **A pipeline to prospective employees from the local recovery community**

HOW EMPLOYERS BENEFIT

- Enhanced workplace safety and productivity
- Reduced healthcare and turnover costs
- Improved employee well-being and retention
- Strengthen talent acquisition
- Positive public image and community impact

Goals of GROW:

- ✓ Engage at least 10 large employers to serve as "ambassador designees" of Georgia's new Recovery Friendly Workplaces
- ✓ Provide free comprehensive training and ongoing technical assistance
- ✓ Strengthen Georgia's recovery community
- ✓ Connect at least 100 individuals in recovery to gainful employment
- ✓ Reduce number of opioid overdose deaths in Georgia (**increased 2300%** from 1999 to 2022)

CALL TO ACTION

Employers with 500+ employees located near participating recovery community organizations are invited to join GROW. By participating, employers will receive free comprehensive training and ongoing technical support, gain access to a motivated workforce, contribute to addressing Georgia's opioid crisis, and enhance their corporate social responsibility profile.

The GROW Initiative represents a unique opportunity to transform workplace responses to the opioid crisis while creating meaningful employment opportunities for Georgians in recovery.

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1 Luo, F., Li, M., Florence, C. (2021). State-Level Economic Costs of Opioid Use Disorder and Fatal Opioid Overdose - United States, 2017. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 70(15):541-546.
2 National Safety Council (2019). "Poll: 75% of Employers Say Their Workplace Impacted by Opioid Use." Available at https://www.nsc.org/in-the-newsroom/poll-75-of-employers-say-their-workplace-impacted-by-opioid-use.
3 National Recovery Friendly Workplace Institute (2025). "Recovery Friendly Workplaces." Available at https://rfwinstitute.org/about/recovery-friendly-workplace/.
4 Frone MR, Casey Chosewood L, Osborne JC, Howard JJ. (2022). Workplace Supported Recovery from Substance Use Disorders: Defining the Construct, Developing a Model, and Proposing an Agenda for Future Research. Occupational Health Science, 6(4).