

## As the opioid epidemic worsens, recovery-friendly policies are the next frontier in workplace inclusion

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For employers interested in cultivating a recovery-friendly culture, getting started can be daunting. The U.S. Department of Labor offers some guidance at its Recovery-Ready Workplace [resource hub](#) and provides materials to get started. Early adopters and advocates happily share best practices too. We've collected some of their tips here.

### **Provide multiple avenues for accessing recovery resources**

Train managers so they're prepared for conversations about recovery, but remember that employees may not be comfortable taking their personal struggles to the boss, their supervisor, or HR. Widely share information about all available ways to seek help, particularly those that are part of employee benefits.

### **Destigmatize substance-use disorder, and debunk myths**

Actively combat misinformation, outdated attitudes, and the stigma associated with substance-use disorder. Education isn't a one-and-done deal; it will be an ongoing process and sometimes involve sharing the same messages over and over again.

### **Amplify the voices of employees with lived experience**

Whether they feel empowered to acknowledge it or not, there are likely people in recovery in your workplace. Nobody should feel pressured to disclose more than they're

comfortable with, but it's worth putting out the message that those willing to share their lived experience will be encouraged, not stigmatized. Often just one person sharing their story can create space for others to do the same.

### **Lead from the top**

It's hard to change workplace culture—and to bring along a workforce that may be skeptical or distrusting—without the strong backing of the most senior leaders.

### **Seek expert advice and training resources**

You don't have to go it alone. Local, state, and federal public health and social service providers can offer expertise and resources. Some states offer financial incentives for hiring workers in recovery, which can be helpful too.

### **Most of all, be a compassionate human**

When employees share information about grief, trauma, or personal struggle, remember to stop for a moment and listen, says Samantha Lewandowski, program director for the [New Hampshire Governor's RFW initiative](#), which is administered by the Granite United Way: "Empathy ... is so painfully simple, but it makes a difference."

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