

## **Hazelden Foundation survey reveals disparity between severity of problem and employer assistance**

CENTER CITY, MINN. (July 17, 2007) -- A national survey of human resources professionals conducted by the nonprofit Hazelden Foundation shows that while substance abuse and addiction are recognized as among the most serious problems faced in the workplace, employer policies and practices are not fully addressing the problem. The survey also found that although most companies offer employee assistance programs, many do not openly and proactively deal with employee substance abuse issues, do not refer employees to treatment programs and face barriers that prevent them from helping employees seek and receive addiction treatment.

The survey of more than 1,000 senior human resource professionals provides an in-depth look at HR professionals' knowledge of substance abuse and addiction in the workplace and the roles they play in helping both employers and employees identify and address this serious public health issue.

"Addiction is this country's number one public health problem," said Jill Wiedemann-West, Senior Vice President of Clinical and Recovery Services at the Hazelden Foundation. "We know that treating drug and alcohol addiction results in more people finding their path to recovery, it results in more resilient families, more productive work places and healthier and safer communities."

### **Acknowledging the problem, but what to do about it?**

According to the survey, more than two-thirds (67 percent) of HR professionals today believe that substance abuse and addiction is one of the most serious issues they face in their company. Absenteeism, reduced productivity and a lack of trust are major problems stemming from substance abuse that affect the efficiency and success of companies across the country. Despite the serious nature of the issue and the wide adoption of policies and programs, many HR professionals are not referring employees to treatment programs. Less than one-quarter (22 percent) of HR professionals say their companies openly and proactively deal with employee substance abuse and addiction issues.

"Hazelden is committed to seeking out ways to help companies across the country address the serious issue of substance abuse and addiction in the workplace," said Wiedemann-West. "We believe that by sharing these survey results we can reinforce the importance and urgency of treatment which will provide the best opportunity for lifelong recovery for those in need."

## **Importance of Education**

**The survey showed that a series of key barriers and personal limitations prevent HR professionals from helping employees seek and receive addiction treatment.**

- More than half (54 percent) of HR professionals surveyed believe that getting employees to acknowledge or talk about the issue is their toughest challenge.
- Nearly half (49 percent) of HR professionals cited at least one of four personal hurdles to helping their employees with substance abuse and addiction issues: lack of experience in identifying substance abuse and addiction (20 percent); lack of information regarding treatment options (16 percent); personal discomfort in approaching employees about the issue (13 percent); and not having enough time to deal with substance abuse and addiction issues (13 percent).

**In an effort to help deal with those barriers, HR professionals want help addressing substance abuse and addiction in the workplace.**

- Eighty-five percent of HR professionals believe that offering education programs to build understanding of addressing addiction in the workplace would be an effective component of a solution to this problem.

- HR professionals said they would benefit most from information on how to identify substance abuse and addiction in the workplace (32 percent); discuss the issues with their employees (25 percent); and choose the most effective treatment options for their employees (19 percent).

## **Challenging the Business**

**According to HR professionals surveyed, employee substance abuse and addiction can have a negative effect on business.**

- HR professionals reported that the most significant problems their companies experience due to employee substance abuse and addiction were absenteeism (62 percent); reduced productivity (49 percent); lack of trustworthiness (39 percent); negative impact on the company's external reputation (32 percent); missed deadlines (31 percent); increased health care costs (29 percent); and unpredictable, defensive interpersonal relations (29 percent).

**Effective treatment programs for employee substance abuse and addiction are invaluable to a business' long-term success.**

- An overwhelming majority of HR professionals (92 percent) agree that an effective treatment program increases employee productivity.
- Two-thirds (67 percent) of HR professionals believe that access to an effective treatment program reduces overall health care costs for employers.

## **Trouble with Testing**

**The national survey showed traditional systems for recognizing substance abuse and addiction may not work as well as HR professionals believe.**

- Eighty-five percent of HR professionals report that they believe drug testing is an effective way to diagnose workplace substance abuse and addiction. However, research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and Addiction shows that 69 percent of substance abusers or addicts in 2005 used alcohol, which can go undetected through drug testing alone.

## **Stigma of Addiction**

**Addiction issues may make new hires less attractive but do not deter commitment to current employees, according to the survey.**

- HR professionals are divided on whether or not their company would be less interested in hiring a recovering addict. Forty-three percent agree that their company would be less likely to hire a recovering addict, and 47 percent disagree.

**According to the survey, HR professionals see a growing issue for women with regard to substance abuse and addiction.**

- More than half (56 percent) of HR professionals surveyed say they believe addiction among women has increased over the last five years.
- HR professionals believe the major barriers preventing women from getting treatment are fear of losing custody of their children (75 percent); reluctance to admit their addiction (69 percent); and fear that their employers (62 percent) and their families (58 percent) will find out.

## **Regional Results**

In addition to the national survey, data was collected from HR professionals in six regions across the United States: statewide in California, Florida and Minnesota; and in the Chicago, New York City and Portland metro areas. These regional results showed:

- More HR professionals in California (30 percent) than nationwide (22 percent) and in Florida (34 percent) than nationwide (22 percent) say their companies openly and proactively deals with employee substance abuse issues.
- More HR professionals in Minnesota (78 percent) than nationwide (67 percent) and in the Portland Metro (76 percent) than nationwide (67 percent), believe that an effective substance abuse and addiction program can reduce overall health care costs for employers.
- HR professionals in the Chicago Metro survey are more likely than those nationwide to agree that providing employees access to effective substance abuse treatment services can reduce overall health care costs for employers (77 percent vs. 66 percent).
- HR professionals in the New York Metro region are less likely than those nationwide to have a drug testing program in place (52 percent vs. 76 percent) and to believe that drug testing is an effective way to diagnose workplace addictions (74 percent vs. 85 percent).

For more information on substance abuse in the workplace and to learn more about Hazelden's resources for employers and employees, visit Making Recovery America's Business. To view further information on the Hazelden HR survey results, see National Survey Highlights.

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## **About the Survey**

The Hazelden Foundation commissioned KRC Research to conduct telephone interviews with 306 senior human resources professionals nationwide, 150 interviews in Minnesota statewide, 150 interviews in the New York metro area, 150 interviews in the Chicago metro area, 150 interviews in Florida statewide, 150 interviews in the Portland metro area and 300 interviews in California statewide – with an even split between Northern and Southern California. The survey took place between September 25 and October 12, 2006. The margin of error for the nationwide data is +/- 5.6 percent and +/- 8.0 percent for regional data.

## **About the Hazelden Foundation**

Hazelden, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1949, helps people reclaim their lives from the disease of addiction. Built on decades of knowledge and experience, Hazelden's comprehensive approach to addiction addresses the full range of patient, family, and professional needs, including treatment and continuing care for youth and adults, research, higher learning, public education and advocacy, and publishing.

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