



National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
Your Environment. Your Health.

Opioids and the Workplace Training and Education



Eric Persaud, DrPH
Occupational Health Specialist
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

WTP: Preparing Workers for Hazardous Materials & Emergency Response



Increase worker safety and health

Trained nearly 5 million workers since 1987, helping business and municipalities keep worksites and communities safer.



Prepare workers for disasters and emergency response

Trained thousands of workers for recovery in response to natural and man-made disasters, such as: World Trade Centers; western wildfires; Hurricanes Sandy and Harvey; Deepwater Horizon oil spill; and Ebola and COVID-19.



Provide workforce development and job placement for underemployed individuals

Reached approximately 14,500 individuals in 30 communities and sustained an average job placement rate of 72%.

Background

- ❖ A total of 70,237 people died in 2017 from drug overdoses in the United States (US)
- ❖ Approximately 47,600, or 130 people per day, die from opioid overdoses
- ❖ Certain occupations are at much higher risk of opioid mortality
- ❖ The NIEHS WTP recognized the need for a training program that raises worker awareness
- ❖ Fall 2018 workshop hosted on “Opioid Related Hazards in the Workplace”
https://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/events/pastmtg/hazmat/2018/fall_WTP_meeting/index.cfm
- ❖ Ninety-six participants attended the pilot training programs in four locations across the US
- ❖ The summer 2019 awareness training was evaluated for immediate outcomes and published in the following report: https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/public/hasl_get_blob.cfm?ID=11661

Preventing opioid use, misuse and overdose among high risk worker groups: Opportunities for prevention

Primary <i>Before pain, injury & opioid use</i>	Secondary <i>Post (at) injury</i>	Tertiary <i>Post substance use disorder (SUD)</i>
Prevent pain & injuries	Access to treatment and appropriate pain management	Access to SUD treatment and recovery support
Health and safety Committees/ Programs	Paid sick leave	EAP/ Peer support programs
.....	Return to Work accommodations	Naloxone/training in the workplace
Opioid awareness		
Address cultural issues regarding help seeking, stigma		

Acknowledgment: Dr. Cora Roelofs for her input.

“Addiction, suicide, and behavioral health are safety issues. We need to approach these in a strong, yet compassionate way. In order to do this, we need to know our audience, educate ourselves, and get comfortable with an uncomfortable topic.”

– Kyle Zimmer, health and safety director,
IUOE Local Union 478

Comments from Trainees

“Doing this by yourself is kind of hard.”

“We need to be comfortable talking about the uncomfortable ...you have to be able to go up there and talk to them as leaders to get them comfortable to seek help or get them to the union hall for information.”

“I’ve turned my head many times, but I am not going to do that anymore...I wouldn’t have felt that way if it wasn’t for this class.”

“When I was addicted, I rather die than go to my EAP.”

“It has been disseminated to all of our local unions”



Impacts

- Worker empowerment, including the increased ability of workers to advocate for appropriate health and safety protections, is key to WTP training
- Unions can play a key role in advocating for safer and healthier working conditions
- Social ecological model of influences on worker health at the individual, workplace, community and policy levels, and corresponding efforts at each level to improve worker health
- WTP has created a supportive and trusted community of grantees and trainers

Addressing COVID-19 and Mental Health

COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Worker Mental Health and Substance Use, Workplace Solutions

AUGUST 2022

This publication was made possible by contract number 75N96021D00008 from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), NIH.

The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of HHS.



Objectives

After attending this course, workers will be able to:

1. Explain the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on worker mental health and substance use.
2. Recognize occupational factors that impact worker mental health and substance use.
3. Develop ideas for individual and workplace level actions that may reduce worker stress and substance use.
4. Describe a recovery supportive workplace.



Conclusion

“This class opened my eyes, even though I have family and co-workers that battle this disease. I did not see it as a disease until this class.”

NIEHS WTP Opioids and the Workplace Resources:

<https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/index.cfm?id=2587>

Contact:

Eric Persaud, DrPH

Eric.Persaud@nih.gov