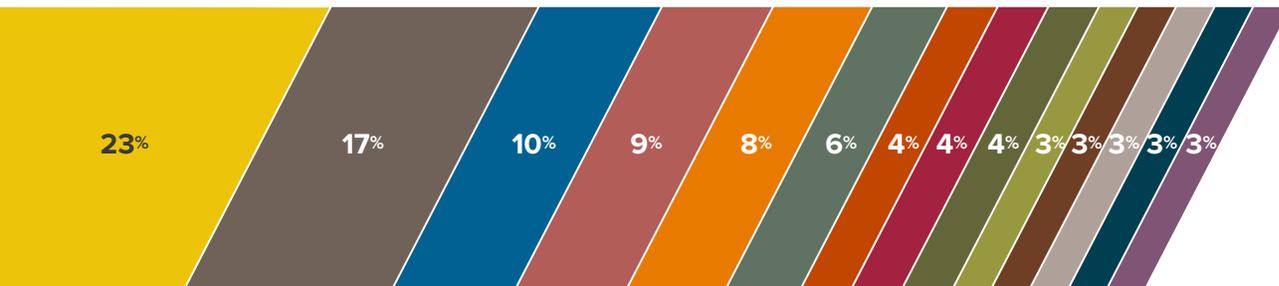


# OPIOIDS AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Opioids have commonly been prescribed to construction workers to treat the pain caused by occupational injuries. Since use of opioids can lead to addiction and overdose deaths, it is important for employers to understand the facts about addiction and for workers to understand the risks and alternatives.



**CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ARE SIX TO SEVEN TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DIE** of an opioid overdose than workers in other professions.



- CONSTRUCTION
- NONE\*
- INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE, REPAIR
- PERSONAL CARE
- FOOD SERVICE
- SALES
- MANAGEMENT
- ALL OTHERS
- MISSING/UNKNOWN
- TRANSPORTATION
- OFFICE SUPPORT
- HEALTHCARE
- SOCIAL SERVICE
- PRODUCTION

DATA SOURCE: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Health Statistics Center.

\*Includes persons who were unemployed, students, disabled, homemakers, or retired.  
Notes: Occupation was categorized using the federal 2018 Standard Occupational Classification system. Industry of occupation was utilized when applicable.



## The workplace is a key environment to prevent opioid misuse, addiction, and overdose.

You can create a safe and healthy workplace environment in which both employees and businesses thrive, through:

- » Strong workplace policies
- » Robust employee education
- » Strong health benefit programs
- » A healthy workplace culture
- » Well-trained managers

## What businesses can do to reduce stigma.

Stigma persists around not only opioids but also prevention, treatment, and recovery services. Studies show that only about one in 10 people with a substance use disorder receives treatment, and that stigma is a key barrier. The belief that addiction is a moral failing and fueled by personal choice has been widespread and long held, and it keeps individuals from accessing services that are essential to their recovery. Understanding addiction as a chronic disease requires compassion and evidence-based medical intervention.

### THE WORDS YOU USE MATTER.



#### DO SAY

(NON-STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE):

Person with a substance use disorder  
Substance use disorder or addiction  
Use, misuse  
Risky, unhealthy, or heavy use  
Person in recovery  
Abstinent  
Not drinking or taking drugs  
Treatment or education for addiction  
Medication for addiction treatment  
Positive, negative (toxicology screen results)



#### DON'T SAY

(STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE):

Substance user or drug abuser  
Alcoholic  
Addict  
User  
Abuser  
Drunk  
Junkie  
Drug habit  
Abuse  
Problem  
Clean  
Substitution or replacement therapy  
Medication-assisted treatment  
Clean, dirty



## What businesses can do to encourage treatment.

Only a small percentage of people with an opioid use disorder (OUD) actually receive treatment. Employers can dramatically increase accessibility by ensuring their health care plans cover all possible options — methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone, as well as behavioral therapy.

- » Data shows that employer-initiated treatment is more effective than treatment initiated by friends and family.
- » Employees should not be required to use any one specific form of treatment, and specific treatment types should not be mandated in a workplace policy.
- » Though OUD is a long-term disease, it has an exceptionally good prognosis for recovery — more than 10% of Americans live in recovery today.
- » As with any long-term disease, relapse is a normal part of the recovery process. Treatment of long-term and chronic diseases often involves addressing deeply rooted behaviors that can take a long time to change. Relapse rates for substance use disorder are similar to rates for other chronic medical illnesses.
- » If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use and would like information on available treatment and recovery services, call the 24/7 Crisis Information and Referral hotline at 1-800-345-6785 (Kent and Sussex counties) or 1-800-652-2929 (New Castle County), or visit [HelpsHereDE.com/Get-Help](https://www.HelpsHereDE.com/Get-Help).



View the entire 49-page [Construction Workplace Toolkit document here.](#)



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
Division of Public Health  
Office of Health Crisis Response