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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **State Issues Recovery Guidelines for Employers; New Survey Reveals Ongoing Challenges With Drug Use in the Workplace**

**May 20, 2019 (INDIANAPOLIS)** — New resources, including important state workforce recovery guidelines and a supporting video toolkit to assist in their implementation, are now available for Indiana employers dealing with drug use in the workplace.

In addition, a new statewide survey finds many employers underestimating the impact on their own organizations and are not seeking tools that will help them deal with this ongoing challenge. The survey results are being released by Indiana Workforce Recovery, the initiative of the [Indiana Chamber of Commerce](#) and [Wellness Council of Indiana \(WCI\)](#) that was formed in 2018 to assist employers.

Indiana's substance abuse treatment law (passed in 2018), championed by Governor Eric J. Holcomb as part of his Next Level Agenda, is intended to help employers by putting forth the proper guidelines they should follow in the event an employee or job applicant fails a drug screening or voluntarily comes forward for assistance. The state of Indiana, through the Family Social Services Administration (FSSA), partnered with the Indiana Chamber and WCI on delivering the guidelines.

Jim McClelland, Indiana executive director for Drug Prevention, Treatment and Enforcement, emphasizes that the guidelines are aimed at helping Hoosier employers and employees navigate substance use prevention, treatment and recovery in the workplace.

"Developing a skilled and ready workforce and attacking the drug crisis are top priorities for Indiana. This program will represent a significant step forward for business' ability to hire and retain individuals in need of help."

The guidelines are now available at [Recovery.IN.gov](http://Recovery.IN.gov) and will fill a critical role – given that 35% of employers do not have a basic written drug/alcohol misuse policy and only 45% have a plan for directing employees to assistance with drug and/or alcohol problems, per the survey.

"The guidelines will provide a blueprint for employers, especially ones that have wanted to do something but didn't know where to start," McClelland adds. "This will enable them to implement a system where they can refer an employee for treatment and still retain that person. The guidelines take the guess work out of what's the next step."

More than 350 employers participated in eight Indiana Workforce Recovery employer opioid strategy events, made possible by an FSSA grant, earlier this year. Employer feedback from those events and beyond contributed to the development of the guidelines.

WCI also produced five videos that serve in conjunction with the state guidelines and take a deeper dive on the subject matters. The videos run 12 to 15 minutes each and topics include: crafting a policy that's right for a company's culture, the ins and outs of drug testing and responding to an employee's harmful use of drugs. An additional video set is slated for release later this summer.

“For Indiana's employers and recovery community, these tools and survey results present an opportunity,” notes Jennifer Pferrer, executive director of WCI. “By building policies and systems that bring the continuum of care into the workplace and directly engaging businesses in prevention, promotion, treatment and recovery, it will help more people enter measurably better recovery sooner, and help businesses retain and hire drug-free, qualified talent.”

Employers are in need of this and additional guidance, as evidenced by the first-of-its-kind state survey.

The overwhelming perception (76%) among the 500 survey respondents is that drug or alcohol use is a problem for their local community but not their company. Meanwhile, only 13% view drug and alcohol misuse as a problem for their organization.

“Businesses are a very important part of every community and it's increasingly likely that drug or alcohol use is impacting a portion of their workforce – whether that's them personally or someone close to them,” says Pferrer. “We want to encourage employers to take a good, in-depth look at their organizations to see what may very well be hiding in plain sight and then help them take the next steps.”

Notably, the survey found that the types of consequences faced by organizations and their employees do not vary across organization size, industry, benefits, etc. The most common effects suffered by organizations due to drug/alcohol misuse are absenteeism (48%) and decreased productivity (37%), followed by a shortage of workers 26%, accidents (15%), increased health insurance costs (15%) and theft (12%).

The most common consequences suffered by employees due to drug/alcohol misuse are family discord (28%) and arrest (23%).

Indiana Chamber President Kevin Brinegar says, “We already know that retention and recruitment are top concerns for Indiana businesses. So, it is more imperative than ever that Hoosier businesses be able to assist current employees in need of treatment and/or education. Yet, Hoosier businesses are not yet equipped to hire, assist or retain individuals in, or in need of, recovery.”

That's underscored by the survey results that reveal a Hoosier who fails a drug screen for the first time is as likely to be terminated (22%) as they are to be given a second chance (24%). Very few organizations (6%) follow best practices when applicants test positive or consider hiring those applicants if they come back and tested negative after they were cleared by a qualified drug/alcohol professional.

Full survey results and links to the new employer guidelines from the state and accompanying video modules are available at [www.indianachamber.com/recovery](http://www.indianachamber.com/recovery).

The WCI survey was sponsored by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, Inc. and Anthem BCBS Foundation.

The Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, an initial funder for the Indiana Workforce Recovery initiative, is focused on reducing Indiana's rate of opioid use disorder, including prescription drug misuse.

“We know that employers have an urgent need for evidence-based resources to connect employees to treatment for substance misuse, and to support their recovery and return to work,” says Claire Fiddian-Green, president and CEO of the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation. “That is why we are pleased to support the Indiana Workforce Recovery initiative in providing Hoosier employers the tools and training necessary to address the opioid epidemic in the workplace.”

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**The Wellness Council of Indiana (WCI) works collaboratively to positively impact the economic vitality of the State of Indiana by evaluating and guiding workplaces and communities through the development of their own comprehensive health and wellness strategy. WCI members and staff inspire active living, community engagement and corporate social responsibility.**