




Rising Disability Claims for Substance Use Disorders

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 August 16, 2023




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Agenda

- Claim prevalence & productivity loss (2018-2022)
- Key determinants
- Mitigation & support
- Evidence-based guidelines
- Support programs




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Substance abuse in short term disability (STD)

➤ **Does your organization have specific RTW programs for employees with substance use?**

- a) Yes, we have well-defined programs in place
- b) No, but we may consider implementing them
- c) Not sure




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Substance abuse in short term disability (STD)

➤ **Have you noticed an increase in claims related to substance over the past two years?**

- a) Yes, an increase
- b) No, no noticeable change
- c) Decrease in claims
- d) Not sure

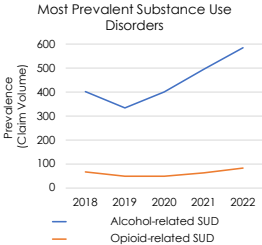



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Prevalence: Increased mental health claims for substance use disorder

Our study reviewed 34,424 mental health STD claims across 77 employers from a variety of industries including retail, healthcare, and the service industry.

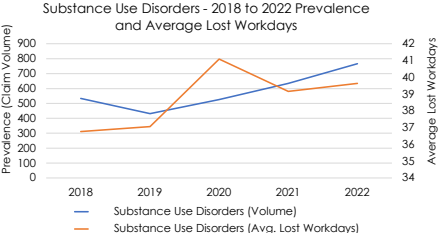

- 2,891 Substance Use Disorder (SUD) claims
 - 77% of SUD claims were for Alcohol-related diagnoses
 - 14% of SUD claims were for Opioid-related diagnoses

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Productivity Loss: Increasing and spiked in 2020

Substance Use Disorders - 2018 to 2022 Prevalence and Average Lost Workdays

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Heightened impact from pandemic



COVID-19 had a significant impact on substance use-related claims:


- Increased stress & anxiety
- Limited access to treatment/support
- Increased conflict
- Heightened substance use triggers
- Increased relapse rates

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*Roberts et al. (2021)

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Key Determinants




Societal Factors



Demographic Factors



Co-Occurring Disorders



Stigma Reduction

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Mitigation & Support

Employers play a vital role in supporting employees dealing with substance use-related short-term disability leaves. Here are some actions employers can take:

Create a Supportive Environment	Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)	Flexible Work Arrangements	Education and Training	Return-to-Work Programs
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By implementing RTW programs and considering key case management considerations, employers and case managers can effectively support employees with substance use, facilitate their recovery journey, and promote successful outcomes.

Early Intervention	Coordinated Care	Holistic Approach	Evidence-Based Practices	Confidentiality and Privacy
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Evidence-based care



- Helping people return to normal activity is good for physical, mental, and financial health.^{1,2}
- On average it takes 17 years for research to become practice.^{3,4}
- Setting recovery expectations early and often can improve outcomes.^{5,6}
- Example: Alcoholism evidence-based guidelines handout



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Evidence-based guidelines

- Use a resource that offers citations from the medical literature.
- Review expected recovery durations and adjust by co-existing conditions/comorbidities.
- Consider the prognosis and how it could impact their job, including possible accommodations.
- Have an open discussion.
 - "Based on the current medical literature, you should be able to return to your normal activities by XX date. Let's work towards that goal, knowing there maybe be challenges that we can face together."

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How to apply evidence-based recommendations

- Create a health-conscious work environment.
- Communicate in plain language resources for employees.

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Before patient injured/ill

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Patient care

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Case management

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Use clinics that apply evidence-based medicine at the point of care to set recovery expectations.

- Occupationally trained clinicians
- Awareness of patient's jobs

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Discuss with patients:


- when they should expect to RTW
- recovery barriers they may face
- if modified duty is available



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Workplace supported recovery programs should:

- Provide information and access to care for substance use disorder
 - medication-assisted treatment, counseling
- Support second-chance employment
- Accommodate workers and offer work assistance
- Provide peer support and peer coaching to increase the social support for workers in recovery
- Promote a work culture supportive to workers in recovery
 - build awareness, reduce stigma, and host alcohol-free and health-focused work social events.



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AUGUST 14-17, 2023 • SAN DIEGO, CA

THANK YOU!

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