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ASSISTANCE IN RECOVERY

*Improving lives together*

## **Professional Interventions**

Intervention services are the most immediate and effective way to help your employee, co-worker, or licensed professional access recovery. Assistance in Recovery's clinicians recognize that addiction, alcoholism and other behavioral health crises can be concerning and dangerous when dealing with doctors, pilots, lawyers and other licensed professionals and sometimes direct, immediate action is needed to save the organization and the employee.

Professionals trusted with our well-being are the last people we suspect of drug addiction. And yet they are as likely as anyone else to abuse alcohol and other drugs. Many doctors, lawyers, and other licensed professionals suffer from alcohol and chemical dependencies and studies show that they have the highest incidence of depression of any occupation. As many as one-fourth of surveyed lawyers exhibited symptoms of clinical depression, more than twice the occurrence in the general population. The American Bar Association has estimated that nearly one-fifth of all U.S. lawyers suffer from alcohol or substance abuse, more than three times the incidence in the general population; An American Medical Association survey of more than 100 medical centers reported that 1-1.5% of doctors were abusing alcohol or other drugs – a very dangerous fact.

### **What does it mean to be a pilot, doctor or lawyer AND an addict?**

Substance abuse disorders affect lawyers, physicians, pilots and other professionals just as they affect the general population. Advanced training does not grant immunity to substance abuse, but neither does it result in excessive risk. In fact, a study by the American College of Physicians found that while one in six physicians will become chemically dependent during their careers, 80% will fully recover after seeking treatment, according to G. Douglas Talbott, FACP, founder of the Talbott Recovery Campus in Atlanta, GA.

It's no surprise that some doctors look to drugs for support, said Dr. Talbott. Taxing responsibilities, intense patient relationships, exhausting hours, and easy access to drugs are a potent mix. There's also what he calls the "M.D.-eity syndrome." "Physicians have an attitude of omnipotence, powerfulness, and uniqueness," said Dr. Talbott. "It's the attitudinal complex drilled into every resident, a sense that something like addiction can't happen to them."



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The most commonly abused substances among resident physicians are alcohol, marijuana, benzodiazepines and prescription pain killers, primarily hydrocodone / acetaminophen, known by the brand names Vicodin and Lortab” according to Dr. Talbott. Among anesthesiologists, the medication most commonly abused is fentanyl, a narcotic that works much faster than morphine to provide pain relief, according to Dr. Booth. “But, like other drugs of the same class, it is addictive and over time, larger doses are needed to achieve the same effect,” he said. Many doctors become chemically dependent after self-diagnosing and self-treating in an attempt to save time and money, according to Daniel H. Angres, director of the Rush Behavioral Health Center in Downers Grove, IL. If they are predisposed to addiction, however, these actions could only serve to accelerate dependency. Other physicians may have a difficult time recognizing addiction due to inadequate training about drug dependency, according to Dr. Talbott. “The majority of residents don’t understand how it [addiction] progresses,” he said.

Airline pilots, nurses, physician’s assistants and other licensed professionals are also highly susceptible to the disease of addiction. “According to the Federal Aviation Administration,” says physician/author Joseph Pursch, “20% of the fatal aircraft accidents in general aviation in 1971 involved alcohol. A study of naval aviators hospitalized at Bethesda Naval Hospital’s neuro-psychiatric service between 1960-1970 indicates that 22 percent were diagnosed as having chronic alcoholism and that 54 percent were heavy drinkers.”

Once most professionals are in recovery, however, they can move forward with their careers safely. Requirements vary, but most states allow physicians, lawyers, pilots, nurses and others in approved recovery programs to remain licensed. These programs allow for retention of personnel and training assets as well as provide a “vicarious learning” process to other individuals who may want to seek help for alcohol and drug problems. Professional programs for doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, dentists, nurses, pilots and others have enjoyed enormous success rates for long-term recovery.

### **What happens at a professional intervention?**

Assistance in Recovery (AiR) is a national company that specializes in managing and resolving workplace crisis from addiction. AiR interventionists, counselors and consultants know how to neutralize crises because of our extensive training and years of industry experience. We have the skills and resources to provide a positive outcome for both your organization and the employee.

#### **1. Get out of crisis**

AiR will meet with the organization to assist in making a smart decision about what is acceptable behavior or circumstances within their business. AiR takes the time to



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educate the employers and co-workers about the disease and provide a variety of individualized care options and resources, as appropriate to their specific situation. Together, AiR and the organization will create a plan that will offer options for the individual as well as set up safe, strict boundaries. Your business can stop being affected by the disease of addiction and its disruptive behaviors.

## 2. Into the solution

Once AiR and the organization have created their boundaries and agreed on the options they will give the individual, together they will immediately address the individual. Typically the direct supervisor will schedule the meeting. This process usually begins by addressing the addict by each member of the intervention explaining their concerns and how the behaviors are affecting their job performance, the risk on the company, and the morale of the other employees. Once the group has shared, the interventionist will lay out the agreed upon set of options for the individual and facilitate an entrance into an appropriate treatment center.

**Call us at 800-561-8158 today** and tell us about your situation, learn more about how to initiate an intervention and **what to expect** from the process.