

Stay Sober, Stay Employed

An Introduction to the Work Sober Program

Who We Are

- SRWC is a community-based agency in Winnipeg, which offers several choices of “pre” and “post” treatment services to adults dealing with substance abuse.
- We facilitate group and individual counselling sessions in a welcoming, non-judgmental environment.
- Our philosophy is participant-centered, and our program content is flexible to the needs of the participants. Services are offered on a sliding scale, and are free for those who cannot pay.

What We Saw

- Winnipeg had NO professional recovery supports offered wholly in the evening, as well as nothing specific to assist individuals while at work or school.
 - For recovering individuals, going (back) to work is often considered a sign of “completing” the early recovery stage.
 - We know the first 3-6 months after completing treatment are high risk for relapse. Going to work can expose recovering individuals to triggers and other hurdles to staying sober.
 - Some individuals cannot take time off work, such as wanting to keep their addiction private from their employer; or entrepreneurs for whom being away could be detrimental to the business.



WE WANTED TO REMOVE BARRIERS FOR INDIVIDUALS IN RECOVERY RETURNING TO WORK, AND BE ABLE TO WALK WITH THEM IN THAT CRUCIAL POST-REHAB TIME.

What We Created

SRWC contracted an individual to create/curate and launch the pilot evening program based on the needs identified above. He and the pilot participants were instrumental in assembling Work Sober.

Format

- Work Sober is an open intake program, meaning individuals can join at any time.
- Group meets 2 times a week for 2-hour sessions. Individual sessions, when utilized, are 1-hour.
- Delivery is psycho-educational group format.

Content

Topics are intended to equip participants to manage their own recovery, and to re-build relationships at work, with their families and with their community. Topics area include (but not limited to):

- Managing Cravings
- Re-lapse Prevention Skills
- Managing Grief and Anger
- Finding Joy in Recovery
- Safety in the Workplace
- Managing Stress
- Mindfulness in Recovery
- Communication Skills at Work

Measuring Outcomes

Kaplan Research created a formative evaluation of the program, the demographics of our participants, and the benefits and success they had. Here is some of what we found¹:

Who Our Participants Were

- Male (two thirds)
- Educated (three quarters completed high school or some post-secondary)
- 37.8 years old (on average)
- Employed (over 50%)
- Low income (40% had family income <\$10,000)
- Never married (60%)
- Heavy users, who had experienced serious withdrawal symptoms.
- Also had mental health conditions (just under 50%.)
- Had reasons to use (most often: (in ranked order) to deal with stress, with boredom, with loneliness, with feelings of sadness, to socialize or have fun, to deal with anxiety.)
- Were criminally involved (Just over 50%, have been charged or convicted of a criminal offence.)

How Our Participants Benefited

- Achieving their objectives for coming, including remaining at work--virtually all of them.
- Significant increase in overall life satisfaction (moving from 53% to 76%) in areas linked to sustainable sobriety, including:
 - Hope for the future
 - Sleeping patterns
 - Eating patterns
 - Overall satisfaction
 - Self-esteem (perceived and Rosenberg)
- Staying employed, while also improving the recovery capacity related with sustainable sobriety.
- They said therapeutic setting helped them succeed, finding us welcoming, relaxing, and non-judgmental.
- In answer to what could be improved, the main response was wanting more .

Moving Forward

Work Sober continues to serve its target population. The program is well received by employers and employees, and is consistently filled to capacity.

Increasing accessibility

- SRWC could increase awareness of the program locally. Stable revenue sources from donors or fees would help sustain the program; If revenue increased with growth, additional groups could run simultaneously.

Reaching Further

- The program's target demographics exist almost everywhere. We would like to explore how collaborating with other agencies could make this program available to recovering individuals in other areas of Canada as well.

Talk to Us!

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¹ Kaplan, G. (2016). A Formative Evaluation of the Evening Recovery Management Program Kaplan Research Associates Inc.