

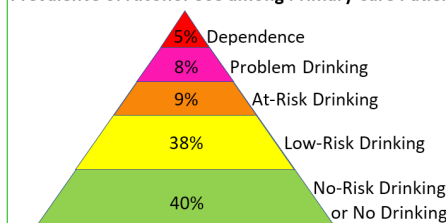
## Alcohol and Drug Issues Returning to Work

The good news in Hawaii is that more people are returning to work again. The bad news is that more people are returning to work showing signs that they have been drinking or using drugs too much during the pandemic and many are having a hard time stopping their use. We are beginning to see an increase in problems due to alcohol misuse or drug abuse during the pandemic (a national issue, not just a Hawaii issue!) so we wanted to provide some education about the issue of **Substance Use Disorders (SUDs)** and how employees deal with the consequences of their use/abuse/dependence differently due to where they fall in the continuum of SUDs.

Many people seeking help from EAP do so because of some negative consequence in their life. In the complex world of SUDs, the issues and frequency of these issues vary for those who have risky behaviors, harmful behaviors, and those who are dependent (what most see as "addiction"). Along the continuum that may lead to dependence, the problems include: taking the substance in larger amounts or for longer than you meant to; wanting to cut down or stop but not managing to; spending more time getting, using, or recovering from use; cravings and urgings to use; not managing to do what you should at work, home or school because of use; problems in relationships; giving up social, occupational, or recreational activities due to use; using even when put in danger; using despite a physical or psychological problem worsened or caused by use; increased tolerance of the substance; and withdrawal symptoms relieved by taking more of the substance.

A landmark study (cited to the right) found that people who go see their primary care physician fall along this continuum with their use of alcohol. The largest segment

Prevalence of Alcohol Use among Primary Care Patients



Tobacco, alcohol, and drug use in a primary care sample: 90-day prevalence and associated factors. Manwell LB, Fleming MF, Johnson K, Barry KL. Journal Addict Dis. 1998; 17(1): 57-61.

[continued]

## Time to Celebrate!

Unfortunately, August does not have any big special holidays... And in Hawaii some of us may not see anything to celebrate:

- School is starting soon.
- COVID-19 is still here and in larger numbers.
- There's no beach space that feels safe.
- It's hurricane season.
- Traffic again. Ugh.
- Back to Work fears and realities.
- The price of ahi just doubled. OMG, poke...

To counteract the "no fun holidays" month of August, there are dozens of special days you can claim as your own. You can celebrate Statehood Day on August 20th, or if you prefer it's also Chocolate Pecan Pie Day. Need a reason to (safely) party? There are dozens of other choices:

- Dog Day
- Women's Equality Day
- Doll Day
- Friendship Day
- Raspberry Cream Pie Day
- Sisters Day
- Frankenstein Day
- Thrift Shop Day
- Scout Scarf Day
- Spider Man Day
- Coloring Book Day
- Ice Cream Sandwich Day
- Watermelon Day
- Root Beer Float Day
- Mustard Day

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## Alcohol & Drug Issues (continued)

either don't drink or don't take risks when they drink. 38% practice low-risk drinking. 9% have started taking more risks when they drink, and 8% were diagnosed with problem drinking. Five percent were diagnosed as dependent on alcohol — what most people would see as alcoholism the disease. It is unclear how many of those in the other categories will go on to develop dependence on alcohol, but for many it is a progressive disease that gets worse over time.

Again, many people come to EAP due to “presenting consequences” — negative consequences of their drinking or drug use. They have tested positive, they have missed so much work that they are referred by their supervisor, or they come in for marital counseling due to their use. We also assist their spouse or family member coming to the EAP due to their concerns, as well as parents who come in due to their concerns about their kids' use.

Matching the employee's symptoms across the SUD continuum is where the EAP plays an important role. Many people at the lower end of the continuum can change their behavior and not progress into dependence. Most employees in Severe SUD (dependence/addiction) who are in denial will have many excuses for their behavior that allows them to believe they are not dependent. EAP counselors and substance abuse professionals are experienced with these issues and prepared to help people cope and work to improve their ability to recognize destructive patterns. As awareness grows along with the growing consequences of an SUD, the likelihood of accepting treatment increases with each crisis.

## Time to Celebrate (continued)

And if those holidays don't give you a reason to celebrate, what about...

- National Sneak Some Zucchini Onto Your Neighbor's Porch Day
- National Blame Someone Else Day
- National Tell A Joke Day
- National Potato Day
- Work Like A Dog Day
- Cycle To Work Day



And finally, if you can't think of anything to celebrate, take a moment on August 28th to honor **National Just Because Day**. Why? **Just because, of course!!!**

Want to find your own favorite? Check out these links and CELEBRATE!

<https://nationaltoday.com/august-holidays/>  
<https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/fun/august/>

## Articles On Our Website

Did you know about all the resources available to you from your EAP's website? Here are a few examples:



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This is an article written by James E. Porter, CEO of StressStop.com and is used by permission. When I started...

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*(If this is a pdf you may be able to click the links to each article above!)*

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