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Wolf Administration Highlights Substance Use Disorder Prevention, Education Tool for Construction Industry

Harrisburg, PA – The Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) joined the Associated Pennsylvania Constructors (APC) to discuss substance use disorder (SUD) in the construction industry, highlight the importance of education and prevention for employees in this field, and to remind them of available safety resources.

“While not often discussed, studies have shown that, when compared to other occupations, employees in the construction field have high rates of overdose deaths,” said DDAP Secretary Jen Smith. “The risk of on-the-job injury remedied with an opioid prescription increases the chances for those in this field to develop opioid use disorder. We must ensure that employers and employees know about every resource available to them to support individuals suffering from substance use disorder.”

A [recent study](#) showed that construction workers prescribed opioids for pain had a higher risk for long-term opioid use and for developing opioid use disorder (OUD); annually, 15% of workers who were prescribed opioids became long-term users; and, long-term users were nearly 10 times as likely to develop OUD.

“The importance of employee safety and well-being cannot be overstated,” said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. “We need to ensure that we are prioritizing both our employees’ physical and mental health and creating a safe work environment in an effort to prevent injuries from occurring in the first place.”

The Wolf Administration’s [Just Five](#) initiative is a self-paced program designed to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and provide education about SUD prevention and treatment. It is displayed as six short learning modules that each take "just five" minutes to complete. The interactive lessons include:

- The Science of Addiction

- Are You at Risk?
- The Dangers of Opioids
- Signs, Symptoms and Treatment
- How You Can Help
- The Gift of Recovery

DDAP rolled out a version of Just Five to Pennsylvania commonwealth employees in May 2021 and an additional version of [Just Five](#) is now available to all of Pennsylvania's workforce. Since roll out, the state-wide Just Five tool has had more than 11,000 new users and users have remained engaged with the lessons for an average of 13 minutes per session.

Use of the Just Five website is completely confidential and voluntary, and no personal information regarding utilization of the program is shared. It can be accessed virtually from anywhere at any time with no registration required. The program is also available in English and [Spanish](#) and accessible for individuals with visual and/or hearing impairments.

"Our members are committed to having safe workplaces and healthy and productive employees," said Robert Latham, executive vice president of Associated Pennsylvania Constructors. "We utilize a wide variety of programs and activities aimed at employee wellness, including substance use prevention. We welcome Just Five as a new tool in the health and safety toolbox."

APC is a membership organization of more than 400 contractors, consulting engineers, material suppliers, manufacturers, and others with an interest in Pennsylvania's road and bridge construction industry.

DDAP operates the Get Help Now hotline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). The hotline is a trusted resource for individuals and/or their loved ones if substance use disorder treatment or resources are needed. The hotline is confidential, available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and staffed by trained professionals who will connect callers to resources in their community. Callers can also be connected with funding if they need help paying for treatment.

To learn more about the Wolf Administration's efforts in combating the addiction crisis, visit ddap.pa.gov.

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