Out of millions who hold full time employment in the United States, close to fifteen million are heavy drinkers of alcohol, exacting a high cost on work organizations, as employees who drink a lot are often absent from work, suffer from a lot of health problems, and are at a greater risk of harming themselves and others.

In the workplace, the impact of alcoholism focuses on four major issues:

- Premature death/fatal accidents
- Injuries/accident rates
- Absenteeism/extra sick leave
- Loss of production

Additional problem areas can include:

- Tardiness/sleeping on the job
- Theft
- Poor decision making
- Loss of efficiency
- Lower morale of co-workers
- Increased likelihood of having trouble with co-workers/supervisors or tasks
- Higher turnover
- Training of new employees
- Disciplinary procedures

While alcoholism can affect any industry and any organization, big or small, workplace alcoholism is especially prevalent in these particular industries:

- Food service
- Construction
- Mining and Drilling
- Excavation
- Installation, maintenance and repair

Two specific kinds of drinking behavior significantly contribute to the level of work-performance problems: drinking right before or during working hours (including drinking at lunch and at company functions), and heavy drinking the night before that causes hangovers during work the next day.

And it isn't just alcoholics who can generate problems in the workplace. Research has shown that the majority of alcohol-related work-performance problems are associated with nondependent drinkers who may occasionally drink too much -- not exclusively by alcohol-dependent employees. In addition, family members living with someone's alcoholism

also suffer significant job performance related problems- including poor job performance, lack of focus, absenteeism, increased health-related problems and use of health insurance

What can the workplace do- establish an EAP?

Back in the late 1940's, early 1950's the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) found that the workplace was ideally suited to address alcoholism through a focus on employee job performance and access to treatment. NCADD founded the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) concept as a joint labor-management program. NCADD wrote the first **EAP Manual** and the first **EAP Standards**. The earliest programs were called Occupational Alcoholism Programs and later evolved into what are now called, EAP's.

Work can be an important and effective place to address alcoholism and other drug issues and by establishing or promoting programs. Without question, establishment of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is the most effective way to address alcohol and drug problems in the workplace, employees and their family members are provided referrals to community resources and services. Many individuals and families face a host of difficulties closely associated with problem drinking, and these problems quite often spill into the workplace. By encouraging and supporting treatment, employers can dramatically assist in reducing the negative impact of alcoholism in the workplace, while reducing their costs.

Research has demonstrated that alcohol treatment pays for itself in reduced healthcare costs that begin as soon as people begin treatment. Alcohol treatment also improves an individual's functioning, leading to increased productivity at work.

FACT: Workplace-based, EAP programs have helped millions of individuals and family members effected by alcohol problems.

Some facts about alcohol in the workplace:

- Workers with alcohol problems were 2.7 times more likely than workers without drinking problems to have injury-related absences.
- A hospital emergency department study showed that 35 percent of patients with an occupational injury were at-risk drinkers.
- Breathalyzer tests detected alcohol in 16% of emergency room patients injured at work.
- Analyses of workplace fatalities showed that at least 11% of the victims had been drinking.
- Large federal surveys show that 24% of workers report drinking during the workday least once in the past year.
- One-fifth of workers and managers across a wide range of industries and company sizes report that a coworker's on- or off-the-job drinking jeopardized their own productivity and safety.

For additional information: NCADD Fact Sheet: Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Workplace.