

Barnstable County



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*Creating a Healthy Connected Cape Cod*

## **Barnstable County Officials Build ‘Employer Toolkit’ to Combat Substance Use**

*Initiative to initially target businesses in the trade, service and construction sector*

**BARNSTABLE, Ma. (June 17, 2019)** – The **Barnstable County Regional Substance Use Council** has unveiled a new online ‘Employer Toolkit’ to help Cape businesses combat substance use disorders in the workforce.

Vaira Harik, Senior Project Manager with the Barnstable County Department of Human Services, is leading the initiative that is designed to help businesses curb substance use among their employees and show why facing the challenge head-on not only enhances the health and safety of workers but also makes for a healthier bottom-line.

**In addition to providing information about substance use disorders, treatment, recommended strategies, and workplace injury prevention, the ‘Employer Toolkit’ also helps businesses calculate the financial impacts of employee substance-use disorders in terms of worker productivity and labor costs.**

“The ‘Employer Toolkit’ will help any business or organization navigate the complexities of dealing with substance use at the workplace. Right out of the gate, we are hoping it will be especially useful for businesses with workers in industries we have found to be disproportionately impacted,” Harik said.

A recent study by County officials of substance-use overdose deaths between 2004 and 2014 found that **overdose deaths hit the trades and service industry on Cape Cod particularly hard**. The analysis of vital records found:

- Men make up 72% of those deaths.
- 65% are employed in the trades and service industries.
- 69% have a high school education or less.
- The construction trades are at particularly high risk of death from opioid-related overdose.

The toolkit includes resources from the National Safety Council, Shatterproof, and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. In addition to providing guidance for how employers can integrate wellness initiatives and training programs in a way that benefits their employees, there is also the bottom-line practical value of having a calculator that can quantify the financial impact of lost productivity and health care cost associated with employees struggling with substance-use disorders.

“We are eager for employers across the county to familiarize themselves with the toolkit and call on us to help provide guidance,” Harik said.

The online toolkit can be found at <https://www.mychoicematters.net/employer-toolkit/>. For more information on how to use the toolkit contact Vaira Harik at [vharik@barnstablecounty.org](mailto:vharik@barnstablecounty.org)

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#### About the Regional Substance Use Council:

*The Regional Substance Use Council was organized by the Barnstable County Department of Human Services in 2014 and is comprised of town coalitions, elected officials from the local, state, and federal levels, the Sheriff and District Attorney’s offices, police, first responders, probation, drug court, school nurses, school superintendents, and drug treatment, recovery, and healthcare providers. The Council has work groups focusing on Prevention, Intervention, Treatment and Recovery. The purpose of the Council is to establish a communication infrastructure across towns, providers, organizations, and individuals on Cape Cod that allows the region to identify and address gaps and disparities in the service system, maximize inter-agency collaboration and to maximize funding and resource opportunities. The Council has multi-sector representation from stakeholders and organizations and includes representation from each of the 15 towns on Cape Cod, elected officials, hospital, treatment providers, community health centers, law enforcement, schools, first responders, parents, faith-based, youth, business community, and people in recovery.*

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