



## Three Projects to Prevent Opioid Use in the Construction Industry

### Preventing Opioid-Related Harms in the Construction Industry

Cora Roelofs, Christopher Rodman, Richard Rinehart, and Chris T. Cain. *NEW SOLUTIONS: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, 2021.

#### Overview

Construction is one of the industries that has been hit hardest by the opioid crisis, and CPWR has been responding in multiple ways. With support and guidance from the North America's Building Trade Union Opioid Task Force and funding from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, CPWR undertook three projects to promote strategies for reducing opioid use. The first created a communications framework to reframe stigmatizing narratives into effective messages that promote primary prevention—that is, preventing injuries that might lead to prescribing of opioids. The second refined and distributed a one-hour opioid hazard awareness training module, and the third assessed opportunities for and barriers to the expansion and improvement of existing union peer-support programs for treatment and recovery.

#### Key Findings

In the first project, a communications firm reviewed fifteen years of research on prevention and addiction, substance use, human services, public health, and related issues, as well as CPWR's communications materials. The resulting report called for: linking causes and consequences to increase support for structural solutions; using the upstream/downstream metaphor to explain prevention; appealing to the “value of investment” to industry professionals; choosing concrete examples of effective interventions; providing sufficient context to key audiences; naming who or what is responsible for the problem or for taking action to address it; and emphasizing systemic solutions.

In project two, CPWR first evaluated an existing training program. Trainee surveys, instructor feedback, and input from the North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU) Opioid Task Force indicated that the training was appropriate and effective but too long for tight training schedules. A new version reduced the training from two hours to one.

For the third project, CPWR interviewed members of the NABTU Opioid Task Force to assess construction unions' response to the epidemic and their peer advocacy programs. The resulting report, *Peer Advocacy for Construction Workers Struggling with Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health*, provided recommendations that emerged from the interviews and key questions to consider when designing a future large-scale effectiveness evaluation of peer advocacy programs. While further research is needed to assess and implement best practices, employers and government should immediately support policies and programs to minimize the impact of the epidemic on construction workers.

#### For more information, contact:

Cora Roelofs: [cora\\_roelofs@uml.edu](mailto:cora_roelofs@uml.edu)

#### Read the abstract:

<https://bit.ly/2RyAaaX>

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