



THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

New Research on Mental Health & Construction

MARCH 25, 2025

Moderator: Chris Trahan Cain, CIH, Executive Director, CPWR

Panelists:

Jonathan Davis, PhD, Assistant Professor, Occupational and Environmental Health,
University of Iowa

Allison Weingarten, Senior Analyst, MDB, Inc.


Edmund Robison, Field Representative, SMOHIT

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- Today's webinar will be recorded and automatically shared via follow-up email.
- The recording and slides will also be posted on cpwr.com/webinars.
- Attendees are automatically muted! Please submit panelist questions via the Q&A box.
- Spanish audio is available via simultaneous interpretation

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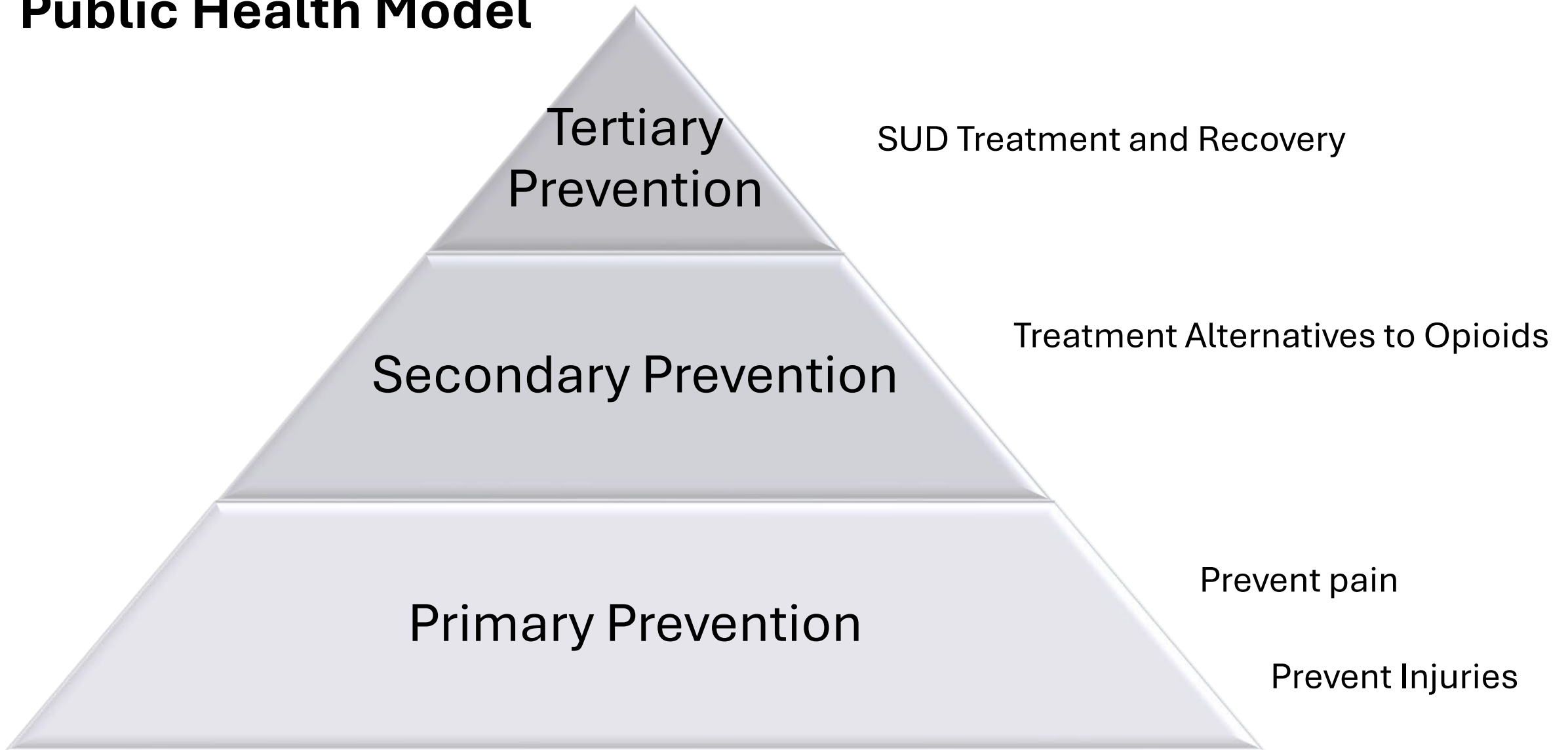
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Public Health Model



Primordial Factors—society and individual risks



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Impact of Employment Laws on Construction Worker Suicide

Jon Davis, PhD

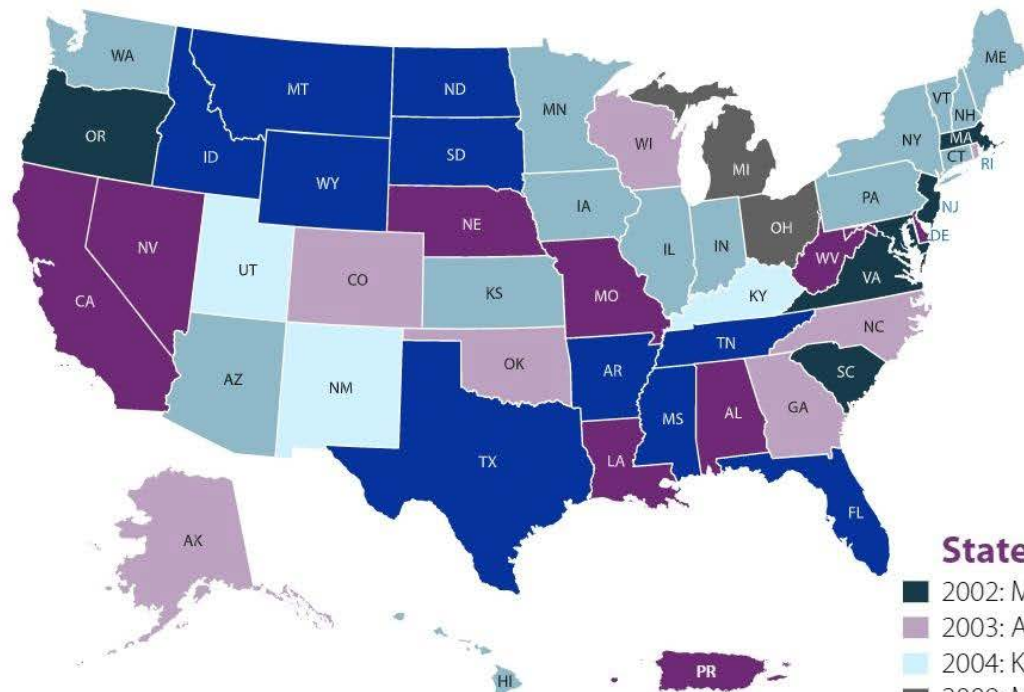
**Assistant Professor, University of Iowa, College of Public Health,
Department of Occupational and Environmental Health**

Research Questions

- What makes construction worker suicide different?
- Are there state level laws that are protective?

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How do we study worker suicide?



The Reach of NVDRS

NVDRS began collecting data on violent deaths from six states in 2002, followed by progressive additions to the system over several years. **In 2018, NVDRS was expanded to include data collection from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.** This expansion brings NVDRS closer to the goal of providing a complete picture of violent deaths across the nation

States added by year:

- 2002: MA, MD, NJ, OR, SC, VA
- 2003: AK, CO, GA, NC, OK, RI, WI
- 2004: KY, NM, UT
- 2009: MI, OH
- 2014: AZ, CT, HI, IA, IL, IN, KS, ME, MN, NH, NY, PA, VT, WA
- 2016: AL, CA, DE, DC, LA, MO, NE, NV, Puerto Rico, WV
- 2018: AR, FL, ID, MS, MT, ND, SD, TN, TX, WY

Study Design

Years: 2013 – 2020

160,939 Deaths from Suicide

45,000 Excluded: Current Military (1.7%), Not in workforce (11.0%),
Inadequate info (9.6%)

128,450 aged 16 to 64

19,602 Construction (15.3%)

Suicide Rate, Construction vs. Other, 2013-2020



Male

50 vs. 24 per 100,000 workers



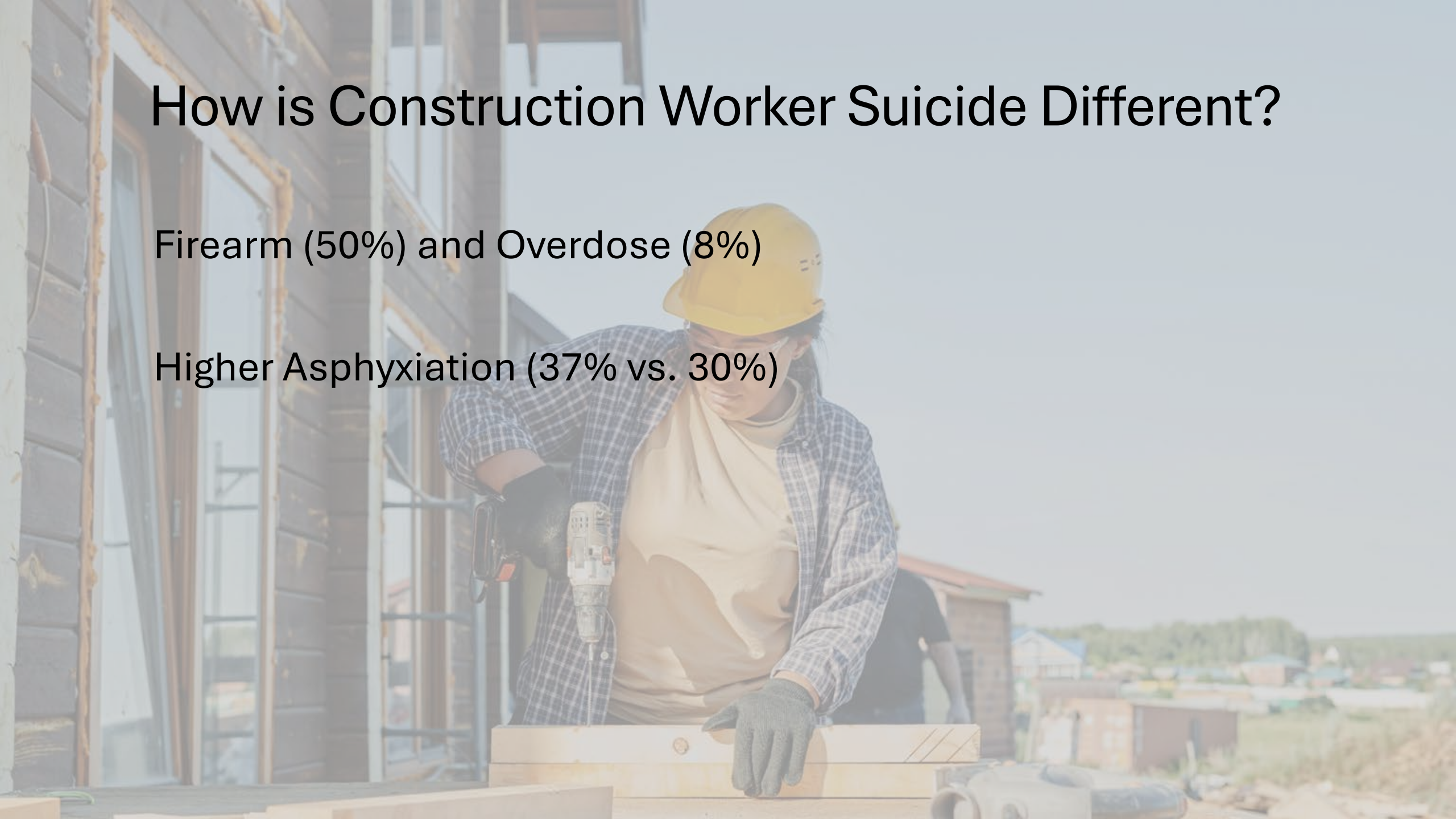
Female

18 vs. 7 per 100,000 workers

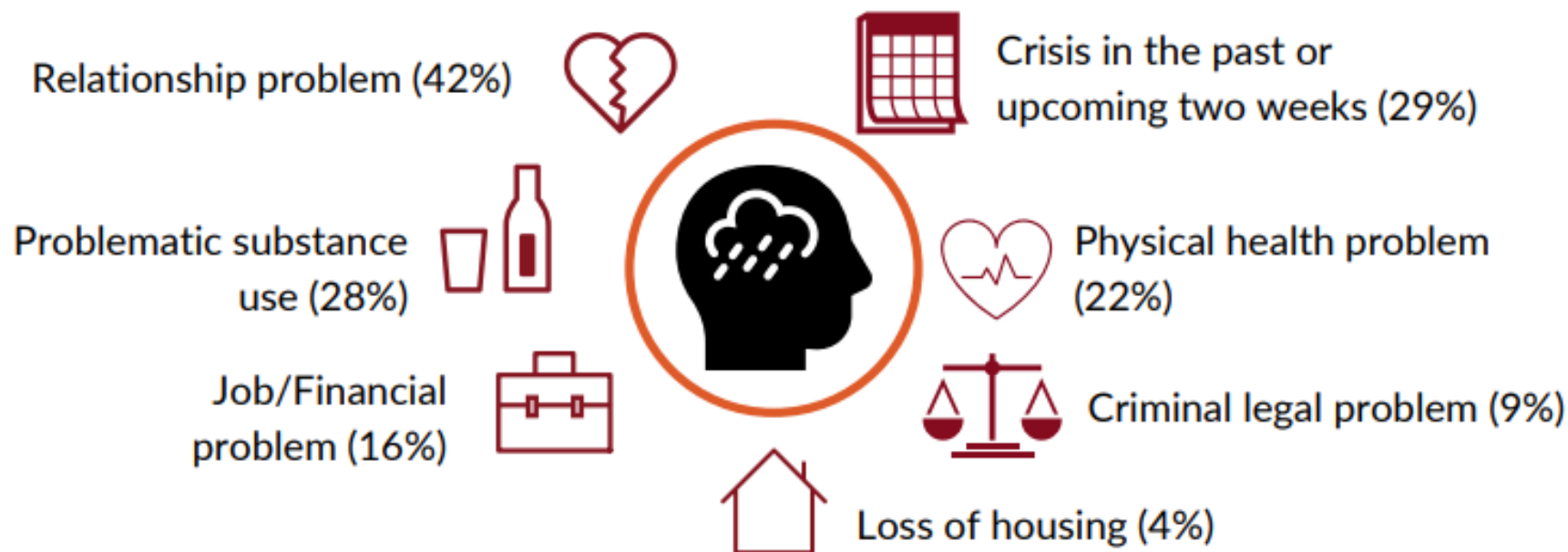
How is Construction Worker Suicide Different?

Firearm (50%) and Overdose (8%)

Higher Asphyxiation (37% vs. 30%)



Circumstances



Alcohol (~20% increase)

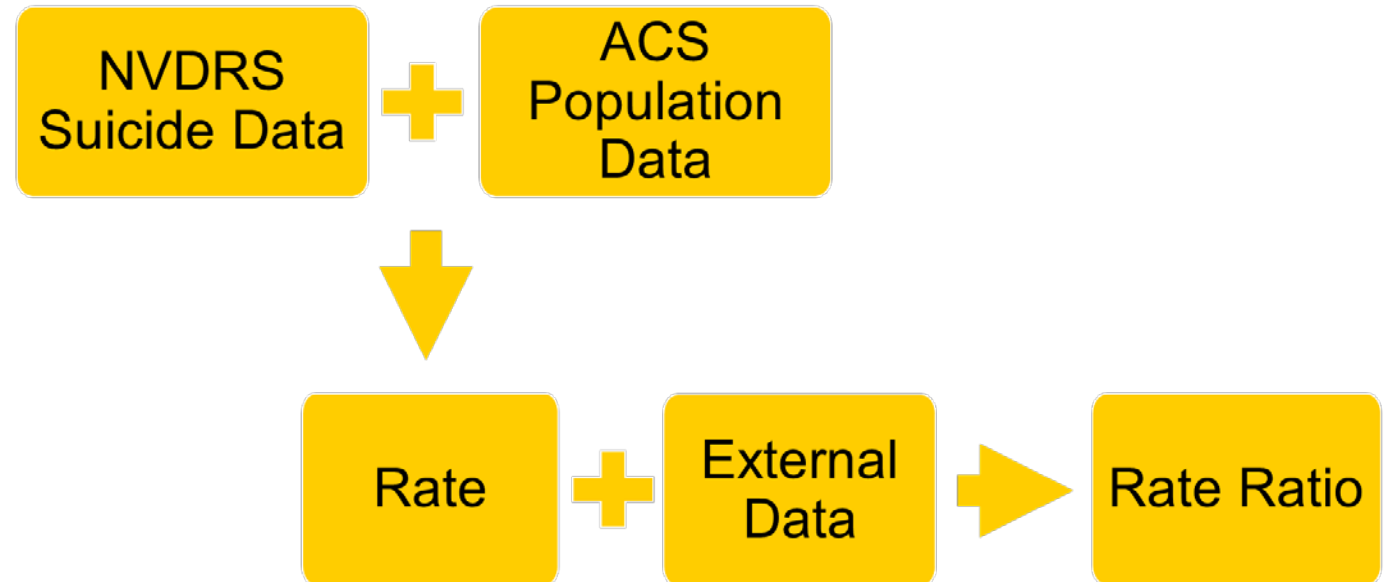
Substance Use (~60% increase)

A photograph of construction workers pouring concrete into a form. The scene is outdoors, with a focus on the hands and tools of the workers. One worker in the foreground is using a wooden float to smooth the surface of the freshly poured concrete. Another worker is visible in the background, also working with the concrete. The overall atmosphere is one of active construction work.

Labor Law and Policy Impact

Preventing Construction Worker Suicide, 2013 to 2020

Laws
Family leave
Paid sick leave
Opioid
Union Restrictive



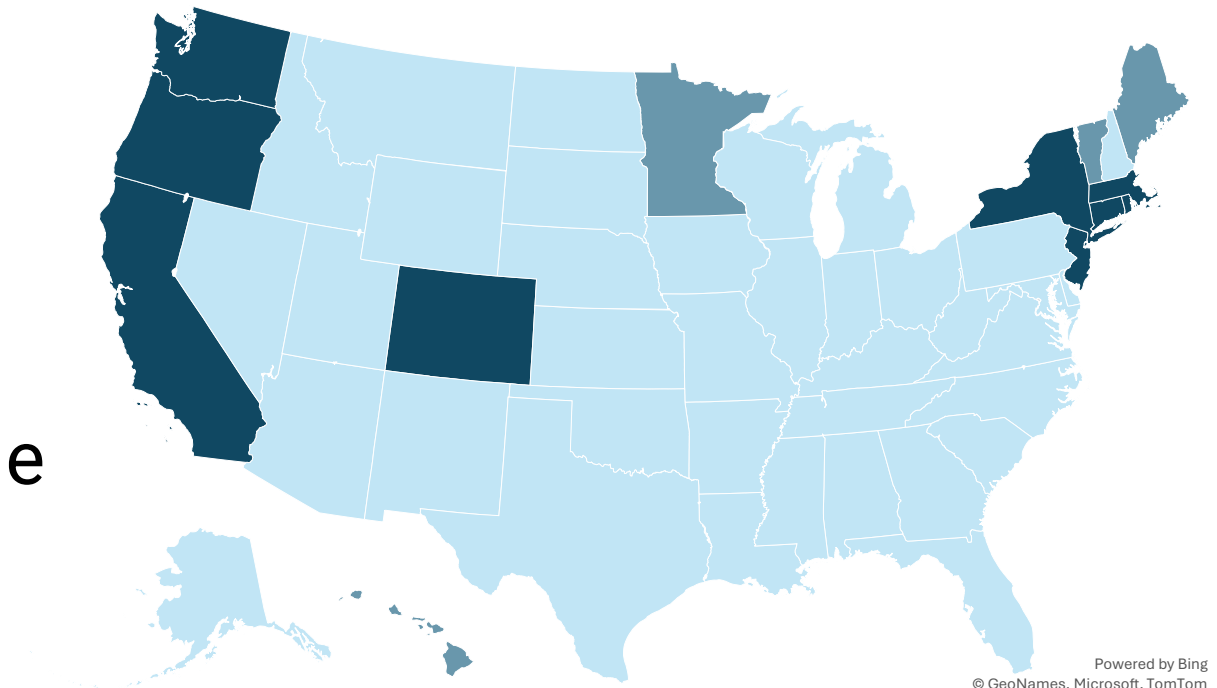
Family Medical Leave

13 States with benefits greater than federal

Reduction

21% Paid, 7% Unpaid / Male

60% Paid*, 54% Unpaid / Female



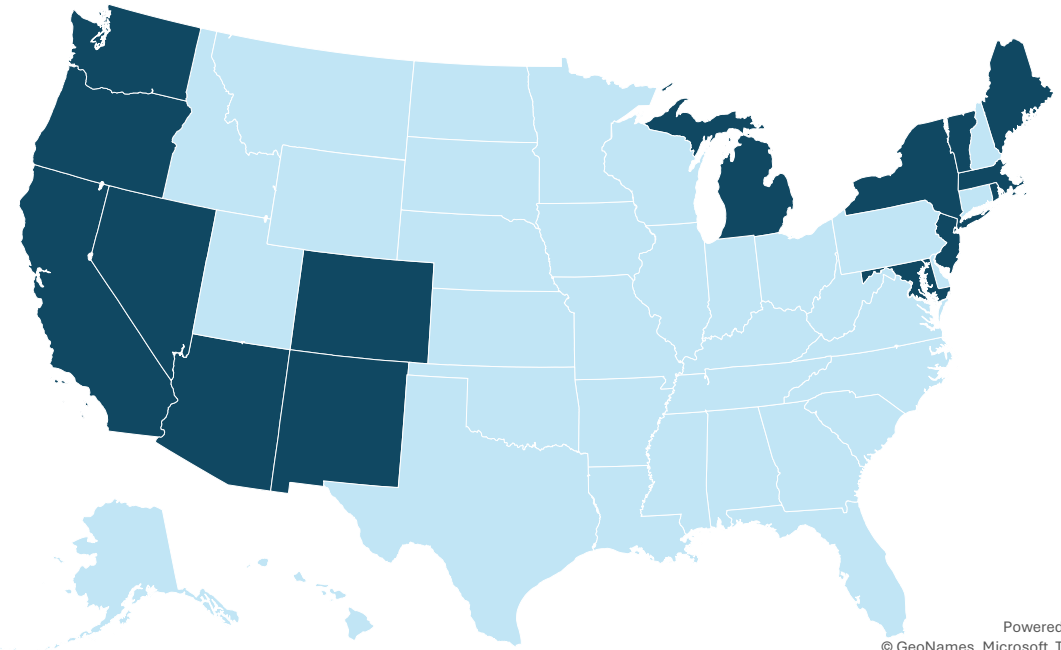
Paid Leave

15 States that cover
construction

Reduction

7% Male

32% Female



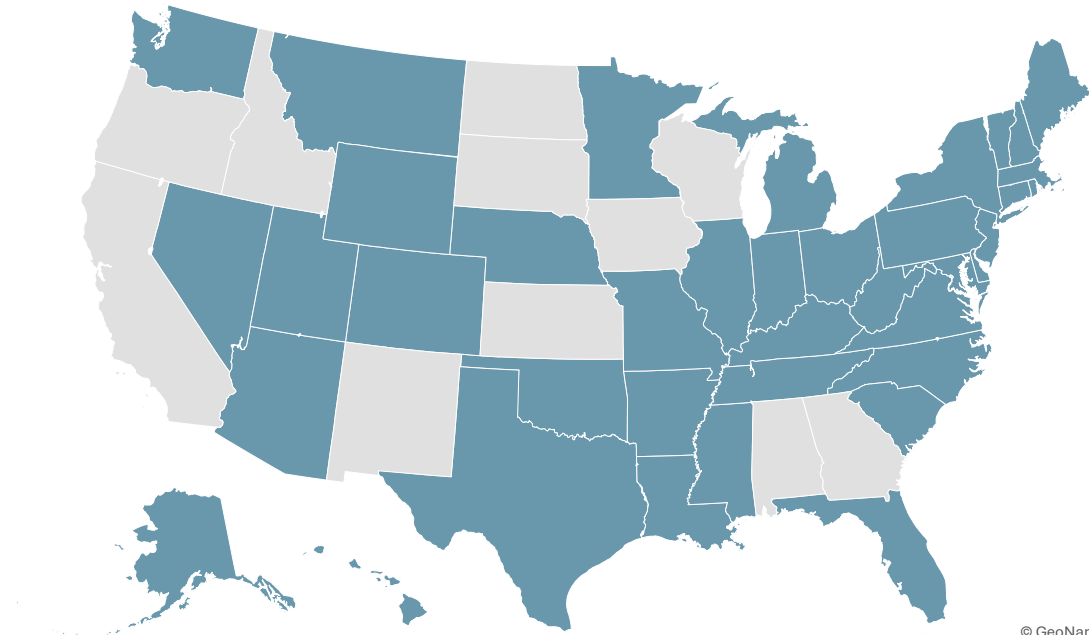
Opioid Prescribing Limits

39 States restricted opioid prescribing

Reduction

17%* Male

No Change Female

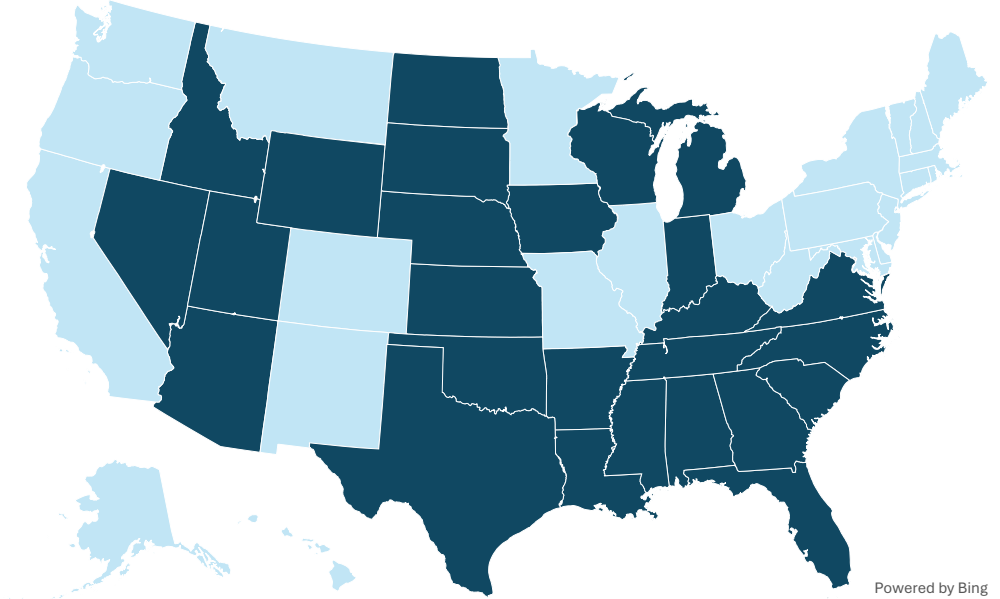


Union Restrictive

27 States
(Michigan repeal after study period)

15% Increase for Male

30% Increase for Female



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Takeaways

Policies at state level could translate to workplace best practices

Protection across policy different for women working in construction

A case study examining the development and impact
of the International
Union of Elevator Constructors (IUEC) Local 1
Member Assistance Education Program (MAEP)

MDB, Inc. and IUEC Local 1

Project Leads

- Allison Weingarten, LMSW
- Brendan Loftus, LAP-C, Director of Member Assistance Educational Program
- Jonathan Rosen, MS CIH FAIHA

Background



ABOUT IUEC LOCAL 1



CONSTRUCTION WORK AND
IMPACT

Formation of MAEP

- Established in 2016 to help members and their families who are struggling with substance use disorder or mental health issues.
- Series of 5 deaths from drug overdoses in 11-month period.

Lenny Legotte, IUEC President: “After losing several apprentices, we were standing over a casket and I started getting mad, what is going on? There is something we can do and we are not doing it.”

Member Assistance & Education Program Road Map

Main Components of a Successful MAEP Program:



Generate Interest



Training &
Education



Leadership
Commitment

MAEP Success

Prior to 2016, only about **10% of members** who went for treatment maintained their recovery.

After the IUEC established the MAEP program, **78% maintained recovery.**

Goals of Case Study



Yield useful insights into the construction union-based member assistance program.



Further the qualitative research done by CPWR that highlighted construction industry peer advocacy networks by doing an in-depth case study of a specific program – IUEC Local 1

Project Advisory Group

Key Informant Interviews

Participant Focus Group

Membership Survey

Final Report



Project Advisory Group (PAG)



Brendan Loftus' Toolbox Talk on Suicide Prevention

Key Informant Interviews



Brendan Loftus, director of MAEP, conducting a toolbox talk on suicide prevention.



Local 1 President/Business Manager Lenny Legotte



New York District Metropolitan Manager of Kone U.S.A. Justin Tomasino



Lee Pirone, Local 1 day secretary

Focus Group of MAEP Participants



Focus group of MAEP program participants with research team.

Highlighted Quotes

“He hasn’t just changed in being sober. He has changed in being a righteous man. He is trustworthy. He is honest. He is hard working, dedicated, devoted, loyal. He doesn’t make a commitment that he cannot fulfill.”
– Mother of a IUEC Local 1 member who went through the MAEP program

“I had no idea. I worked with this person every day. Not this guy who comes to work every day and does his job. Looking back, in this situation, I was willing to support him because I love him, he is a friend, I recruited him. I know his family; I know his kids. But if I am being truthful, when we pull a mechanic off a job because he is a drunk, I am probably less in the helpful frame of mind, more like, ‘let him go deal with this on his own, not on my dime.’” – Justin Tomasino, Management

Highlighted Quotes

“I believe the best way is peer based, people with lived experience, on-the-job, within the industry, and people in recovery. It was inspirational to me to hear a person within the industry, Bobby Stack, who was a volunteer when we had the bare bones of program.” – Brendan Loftus

“Brendan calls on me because he knows I am a good, sober man and I want to help. I will pick up or drop off members going to treatment at the airport when needed.” – Jonathan Anderson (Peer)

“The thing I never lost was my job. Never got kicked out of the union.” – Focus Group

“There’s a lot of sober people in this union now. It’s not like it used to be. Now half my coworkers are sober.”
– MAEP Participant

Survey

- Years in the IUEC Local 1 Apprenticeship Program:
 - 10% (n=31) had 0-1 years
 - **85% (n=269) had 1-5 years**
 - 5% (n=17) did not answer the question.
- **6% (n=19)** noted a **culture of misuse** of drugs and alcohol among union members.
- **23% (n=74)** noted a **problem with stress, anxiety, and depression** among union members.
- **54% (n=171)** knew about the Member Assistance and Education Program (MAEP).

Survey results show a favorable impact of the MAEP program.

Survey (continued)

- **3% (n=10)** of survey respondents indicated that they have **utilized the MAEP**.
- **80% (n=254)** would **seek out the MAEP** if they were to experience a drug, alcohol, or mental health problem.
- Of the **largest barriers** to getting help for SUDs or mental health concerns, apprentices ranked:
 - **#1, fear of losing the apprenticeship**
 - **#2, financial loss**
 - **#3, stigma**
 - **#4, other reasons**

Survey results show a favorable impact of the MAEP program.

Participant Responses: What stressful or hazardous conditions in the industry would you change?

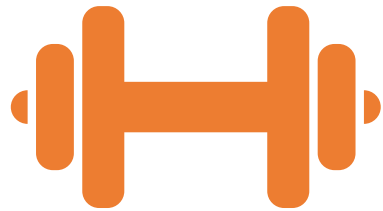
What stressful or hazardous condition in the industry would you change?	Percentage	Number
Paid sick leave	43%	136
Prevention of strains and sprains	25%	79
8-hour workday	10%	32
Other	10%	30
No response	13%	42

Key Findings

- **Case study provides first-person testimony** about the impact of MAEP on workers, families, and employers.
- Illustrates a **site-specific strategy for developing an effective program** that addresses mental health and substance use among a population of construction workers.
- MAEP and related training/recovery **resources have significant impact** on program members
- **Benefits** to workers' families and employers **incentivize replication and implementation** through the industry
- MAEP programs can **help overcome stigma** and the “deadly silence” in traditional drug -free -workplace programs.

- There is a **need to develop resources** to address gaps in:
 - Systematic record keeping
 - Establish family support networks

Strengths and Limitations



Strengths



Limitations

Recommendations



For Local 1



For IUEC International



For the Construction Industry

Thank you

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