

# Supporting Construction Workers – Suicide Prevention, Mental Health, & Substance Use

April 29, 2021

**Welcome and Introduction:** Dr. James Winford, Chairperson, National Asphalt Pavement Association

## **Presenters:**

Marianne Wolfe, Managed Care Supervisor, Allied Trades Assistance Program

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**Q&A Moderator:** Christopher Rodman, CPWR Opioid Projects Coordinator



## **For Technical Difficulties:**

Chat with host, Jessica Bunting or email [jbunting@cpwr.com](mailto:jbunting@cpwr.com)

If you have trouble hearing through your computer, call in via phone:

(415) 655-0003 Access code: 127 167 7230#



# Allied Trades Assistance Program

Marianne Wolfe, LSW

Managed Care  
Supervisor

# Reasons for substance use in the construction industry

- **Long hours:** The stress of working around the clock is directly correlated to using drugs or alcohol.
- Many construction jobs are routine and predictable. Individuals who work long hours on jobs like this are more open to developing substance use disorders.
- **Unstable work:** Many positions in the construction industry are project-based followed by periods of unemployment. Drug and alcohol use can result as means to cope with the uncertainty.
- **Physical distress:** Ongoing strain on the body and physical injury can also result in substance use. And, conversely, substance use can also lead to further injury.
- The nature of the work and the attitudes of many of the workers are similar to the “work hard and play hard” philosophy of this particular social group. In addition, many individuals working in the construction industry come from backgrounds where alcohol use and even illicit drug use are relatively accepted and common.

# Overdose rates in construction

- Construction workers have the highest mortality rates for drug overdose deaths and prescription opioid–related overdose deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Construction workers are 7 times more likely to die of an opioid overdose than workers in other industries
- Construction workers have the highest proportion of heroin-related overdose deaths
- Construction workers represent about 25% of fatal opioid overdoses among all worker

# Present day Opioid Epidemic

- Manufactured fentanyl has become present in drug markets
- Non-opioid users are dying as fentanyl is mixed with other drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine
- Data is trending to likely show that fatal overdoses have increased dramatically in many communities during the COVID-19 pandemic

According to data from the National Survey on Drug Use conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration Employees of the construction industry, have nearly twice the rate of substance use as the national average

- Around 15% of all construction workers in the United States have a substance use disorder compared to 8.6% of the general population of adults
- About 1.3% of construction workers have an opioid use disorder, almost twice the national average
- 16.5% of construction workers reported heavy alcohol consumption within the past month, nearly twice the average of all full-time workers
- 14.3% of construction workers were diagnosed with a substance use disorder in the past year, more than 1 ½ times the average of all full-time workers

A photograph of two construction workers in a blue shirt and yellow hard hat, working on a rebar structure. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey filter. The text "ADDICTION IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY" is centered in white, bold, uppercase letters.

# ADDICTION IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY





# MENTAL HEALTH IN CONSTRUCTION





# Mental Health in Construction

Statistically our industry is one of the worst in terms of workers suffering with mental health issues and one of the highest rates of suicide per industry in the U.S.

The construction industry is the perfect example of how differently society views physical and mental health.

# Perception

- The construction industry is male dominated, and the perception that the men who work within it are 'tough'.
- Recent surveys have suggested that 64% of construction workers want better support for their physical health, mental health and overall wellbeing, with calls coming from within for the industry to have a better awareness of mental health.

# Suffering in silence

- Many workers feel forced to “deal with it,” not seeking out the help they need, and symptoms get worse.
- To counteract this long-standing challenge, the mental health of your workforce needs to be prioritized at the same level as safety on job sites.

The CDC has found that the construction industry exhibits many common risk factors that are associated with feelings of helplessness.

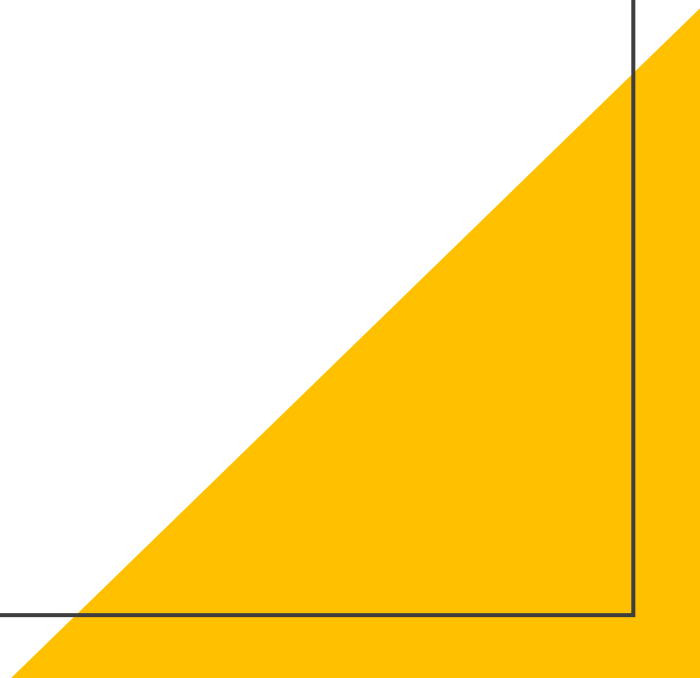


## What you can do to help?

- One of the most powerful tools in your toolbox to fight against behavioral health issues is education.
- No progress can be made without a culture change, and every educated worker is a step closer to decreasing the stigma that keeps workers from facing their inner demons.



STIGMA



# Stigma

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Untreated drug and alcohol use contributes to tens of thousands of deaths every year and impacts the lives of many more.

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Minimal progress has been made in removing the stigma surrounding substance use disorders.

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People with addiction internalize this stigma, feeling shame and refuse to seek treatment as a result.



# Separating the illness from the person

- He's living with bipolar disorder instead of saying "he's bipolar"
  - Be compassionate with the person and hard on the illness
  - It is not the person's fault that they are living with an illness
  - It's an illness
- 

THE MOST EFFECTIVE  
APPROACH TO  
ADDRESSING A PUBLIC  
HEALTH CRISIS IS THE:  
***PUBLIC HEALTH MODEL***



# The Public Health Model

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1. Prevention & Awareness

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2. Intervention

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3. Treatment

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4. Support



A row of six light-colored wooden blocks, each with a dark letter cut out, spelling the word "HEALTH". The blocks are arranged on a wooden surface. The background is a gradient of green and grey, with a white, pixelated shape at the top left.

HEALTH

SAMHSA has defined recovery as, the process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives and strive to reach their full potential.

Recovery is a personal journey with the goals of hope, empowerment and autonomy.

# ATAP Contacts



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## ATAP Online

- [www.alliedtrades-online.com](http://www.alliedtrades-online.com)
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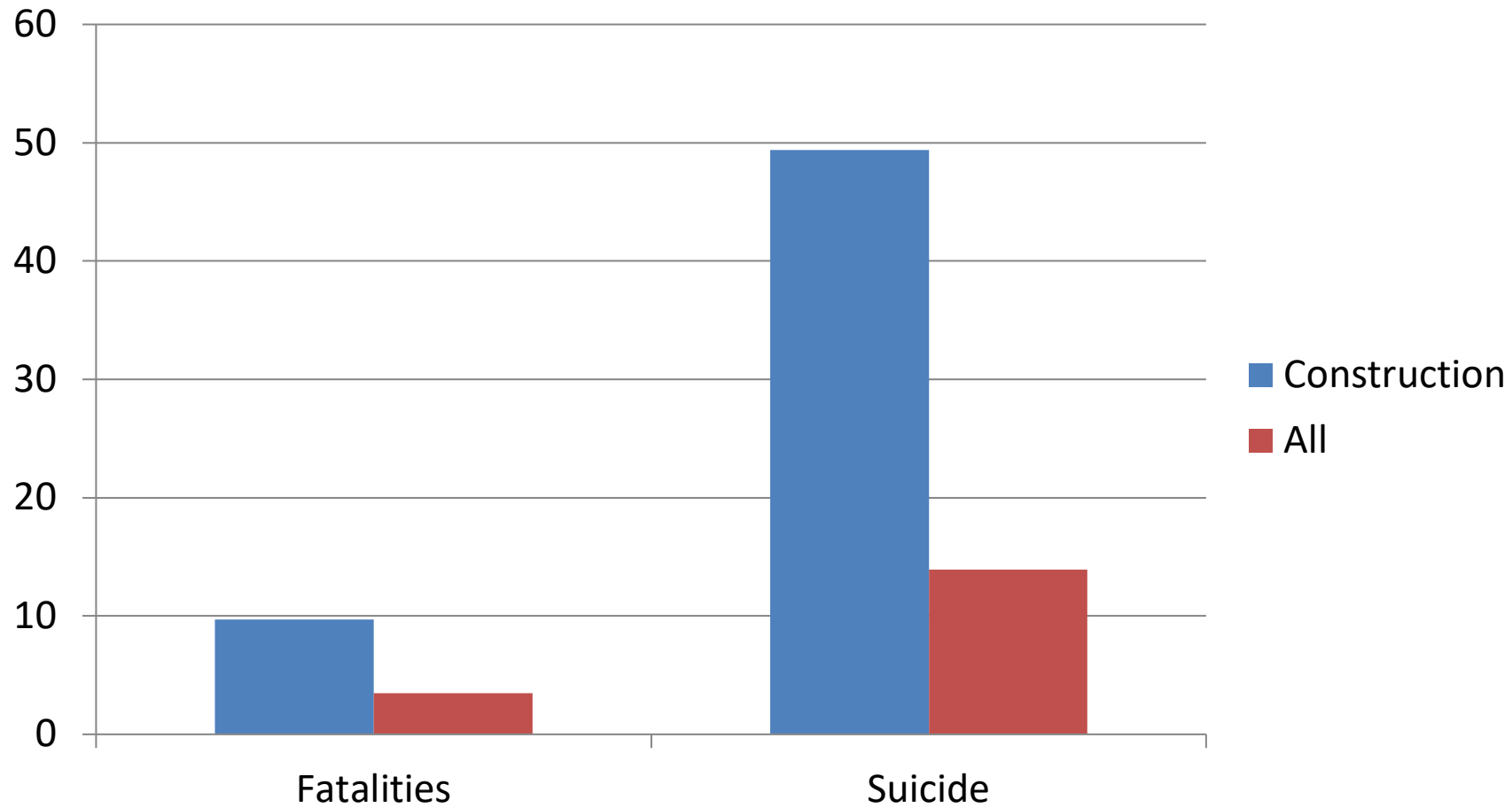
# Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in Construction

Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention,  
CIASP

The time is now to re-think traditional safety and culture



# A Bar Chart is Worth 1,000 Words





# Why are Suicide Rates so High in Construction

- Male dominated industry
- Strength, determination, grit – the same traits that can be a barrier to asking for help for mental health concerns
- Access to lethal means – firearms, tall places, pills
- Chronic pain from hard, physical labor
- Higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse
- Shift work or non-traditional hours → sleep disruption → depression
- Financial stress; no work no pay, lack of paid leave
- Time away from families → relationship stress, lack of support
- Multi-employer work structure
- Competitive and high pressure work environment



*How do we reconcile business needs with human needs???*



# Culture Change



# Why Men are at Greater Risk:

- Traditional male gender roles discourage emotional expression.
- Depression may be underdiagnosed in men.
- Men are less likely to seek help for emotional problems.
- Men may be more likely to self-treat symptoms of depression with alcohol and other substances.
- Men are also more likely to use lethal suicide methods.

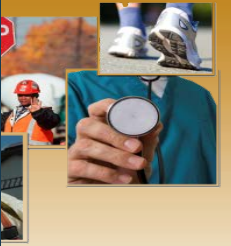


# Why it's Important to Address Mental Health

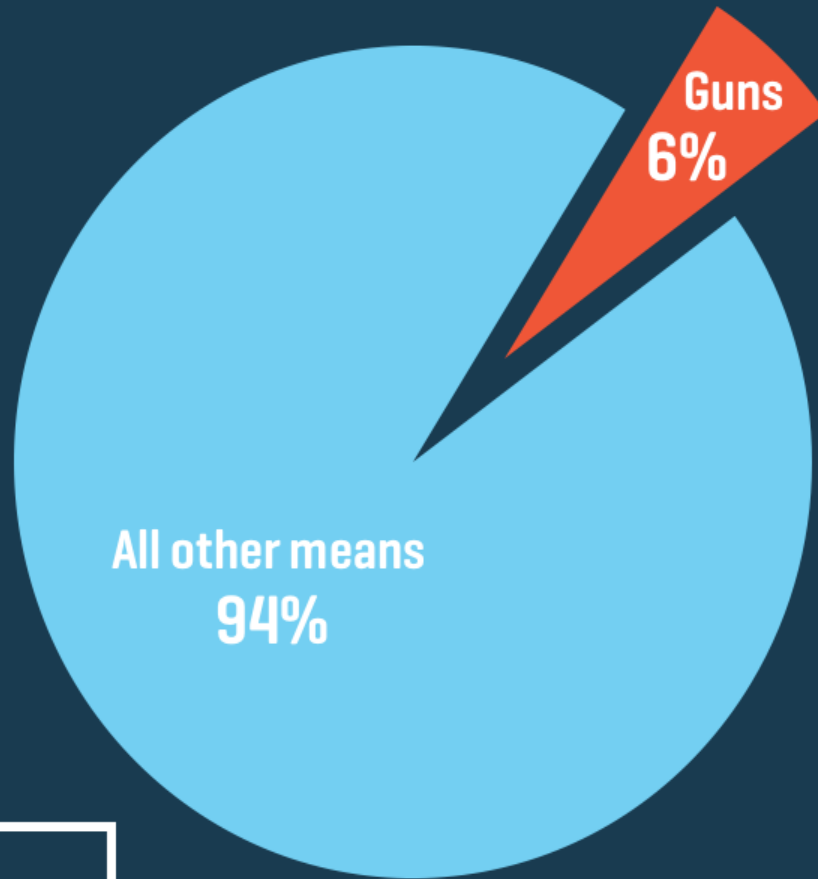




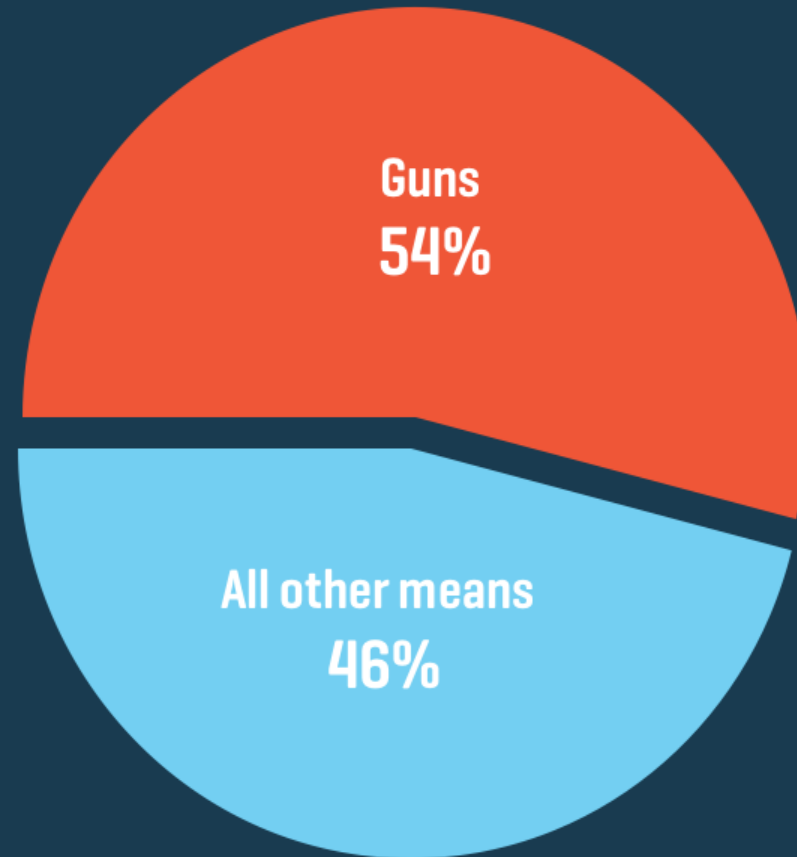
# GUNS AREN'T THE MOST COMMON WAY TO ATTEMPT SUICIDE. BUT THEY ARE THE MOST FATAL.



### ALL SUICIDE ATTEMPTS



### FATAL SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

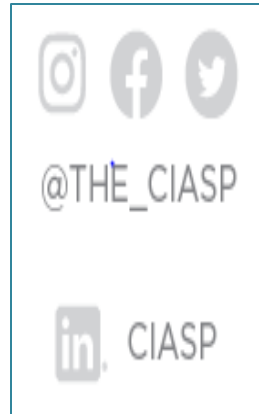


# CIASP Resources

<https://preventconstructionsuicide.com/>

## Resources

- Needs analysis & checklist
- Toolbox Talks
- Posters
- Wallet Cards
- Display Posters
- Hardhat Stickers
- Screening Tools
- Articles



## Pledge

- Take the pledge to **STAND** up for suicide prevention
- **Safe**
- **Training**
- **Awareness**
- **Normalize**
- **Decrease**

Take the pledge, download resources, order supplies, access free training and screening all on the website



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**1-800-273-8255**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

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 **Veterans  
Crisis Line**  
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**IT'S YOUR CALL**

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