

Recovering addicts in the field of substance abuse counseling

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Is Substance Abuse Counseling a good career for a convicted felon and recovering drug addict? A person's past mistakes in life can sometimes prevent that person from getting certain jobs later in life. With a prior criminal record some employers may not consider that individual as a good candidate for the job. Substance abuse counselors can be needed in hospitals, institutions, rehab centers, schools, and other government run facilities.

With a felony conviction against your criminal background check, government run facilities normally will not hire convicted felons due to higher risk of a liability. Personal background checks are sometimes required as well and if that individual has a past known drug addiction, employers may seem skeptical of hiring. It has however been acknowledged that a recovering drug addict will make a better candidate than someone with no past drug addiction. A recovering drug addict has experienced personally the addiction, struggles, and withdrawals that are present when trying to become sober.

Close to 100,000 people in the US work in recovery related jobs earning their living as drug counselors, "techs", or social workers at the hospital treatment programs and thousands of rehabs across the country. Most people who enter the field of substance abuse counseling have some kind of personal connection with the problem. More than 50% are recovering drug addicts themselves or have family members or close friends that are addicts. A strange twist on the famous Hunter S. Thompson's quote "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro. With a personal connection to a past life of

drug/alcohol use it usually tends to mean substance abuse counselors are incredibly passionate and dedicated. There is however a downside. Many addicts even significant amount of sober time, are at risk of a relapse. When substance abuse counselors stumble, the consequences are often more crucial than that of someone who is not in that type of career. Cynthia Moreno Tuchy, the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR of THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE COUNSELORS (NAADAC) puts a rather fine point on it. We (chemical dependency professionals) do very well treating clients in general; we don't do so for the professionals in recovery. We tend to blame the victim -we say you have a disease, but we are not recognizing relapse is part of that disease cycle. Why would we not do for addiction counselors as we would for everyone else? " She says. Most graduate programs in chemical dependency require applicants to have significant time free-typical a year or two-from chemical use and in most states licensing boards require similar amounts of clean times.

When a substance abuse counselor relapses, they violate that condition and normally lose their jobs. The climb back tends to be quite steep. While relapse of a counselor poses danger to patients, the biggest threat is actually to the person who relapses. " Anecdotally the recovery rate for persons who work in the field that relapse is abysmal. " Says Chuck Rice. Counselors who do relapse, may continue to escalate with their relapse for fear of losing their job and can go untreated and hit rock bottom once again, which could have been a simple slip up if treatment was assembled as sought.

Many people, who make a living in the recovery field, complain over time, it can become easy for professionals to blur the line between demands of personal recovery and the demand of their job. Giving the low success rate at many rehabs, burn out is a major issue. “ When you work in the field,” says John Leonard, “ The last thing you want to do when you get off work is to go to a meeting. ” Furthermore, recovering substance abuse counselors get used to being the one with the answers, the experiences, and creditability. It’s easy to confuse work with their own personal recovery programs.

The irony is that support and safety nets that exist for other professionals who fall victim to addiction does not exist for people who work in this field. “ Sobriety rates of monitored professionals exceed 90%” Says Chuck Rice, “ A rate far above the average general population. ” Touhy estimates that 85, 000 people in the addiction work force and as many 30, 000 are recovering addicts. Without a national monitoring system and strong areas of informal support, these professional who work every day helping others to a clean life will go without the support they need and deserve.

As the recovery field grows, so will the need for the professional working to help make the system work. If a system such as this is established I believe it is possible and a good choice career for a recovering addict to pursue a career as a substance abuse counselor despite the risk and triggers that can lead to relapse many counselors and people working in the addiction field can relate to current addicts lifestyles and be grateful they are not on that path themselves. Having desired to help others recover from addiction

because they themselves re in recovery there is hope in knowing that recovery is possible because they have achieved it. There was an incident that happened in 2009 that captured the national news. Adam “ DJ AM” Goldstein, host of MTV GONE TO FAR intervention reality series, was found dead at his New York City apartment from a drug overdose. DJ AM had just finished filming the MTV intervention reality series when he himself relapsed and died from a drug overdose. He had been sober for eleven years and had hoped to help others beat drug addiction.

Goldstein admitted before his death that watching the videos filmed by Gone to Far’s addicts and loved ones was a “ terrifying” experience. Goldstein stated,” I am a recovering drug addict. When I see and I am in their room and the paraphernalia and the whole lifestyle and everything, I still, eleven years later, have little thing in my head that starts thinking, Oh, Where’s that? , I wonder what that is? And I look at it in this way, And I have to constantly remind myself why I’m here and remember what it was like. “ There’s no better way to remember what it was like at my bottom than to see someone at their bottom, and to help them and lift them up. ” Nick Zybko wrote that nearly 40% of substance abuse counselors relapse over the course of their career. The need for substance abuse counselors is growing in today society. With economic failures and job layoffs, more people today are at a greater risk in turning to drugs or alcohol to escape and run from their problems. Counselors and other professional workers in the addiction fields are continuing to search for roles to help society deal with substance abuse.

Counselors are aware of the destruction it causes to individuals, families, businesses, and other organizations caused by dependency on alcohol or other drugs. One factor in important quality needed in a successful intervention and recovery with counselor and patient is empathy, genuineness's, warmth, immediacy. Paired along with effective helping skills, such as questioning, comforting, self-disclosing, clarifying, and other skills common to the counseling process.

Most substance abuse counselors who are recovering addicts can relate to the patients on a more personal level and a patient-counselor trusting relationship can be better formed. Each organization and treatment facilities differs from state to state as to what credentials you need to pursue a career as a substance abuse counselor. All facilities I have researched are accepting to recovering addicts as long as there is a sobriety of one to two years. Most recovering addicts have a criminal background record as well due to the “addiction disease”.

There are some rehabs a treatment facilities that only hire certified substance abuse counselors who are in fact recovering addicts even with a criminal record. As long as the substance abuse counselor is not on probation or parole this type of career is perfect for a recovering addict with a criminal past who has the desire to help others recover from addictions. As with any career and everyday life, a recovering addict is always at risk of relapse because of the disease. Perusing a career as substance abuse counselor has it downfalls as well as its advantages.

Living a drug free life and remaining in recovery is important no matter the choice of career. I have pondered throughout most of my life as to what type of career I want in life and now that I am at a point in my life to making positive changes, I feel substance abuse counseling is an excellent choice for myself and perhaps others who have lead a similar life to myself and have the want and desire and even personal experience and knowledge to help others recover from their addictions to live a healthy happy life without drugs or alcohol.