

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION WILL AFFECT YOU**

In recent years, alcohol and drug addiction cost the U.S. economy 185 billion dollars. This loss in the workplace was due to absenteeism, decreased productivity, theft, injuries and mistakes. In addition, emotional costs of frustration, anger, depression, and loss of trust take their toll when an employee, employer, or co-worker struggles with alcohol or drug addiction. As an employer, you have to ask yourself what is the best way to handle the situation? Am I making a mistake? What can happen legally if I am wrong? What is my liability? Do we offer the impaired person help, or do we ask them to resign or fire them? Unfortunately, the second option only allows the individual to remain sick, and they carry the problem to their next job.

Statistics alarmingly show that in America the disease of chemical dependency affects 10% of any given group of people. This statistic tends to be even higher in the medical professions. The disease does not discriminate and affects all social, economic, racial and ethnic groups. This disease directly affects one out of three families. The question is not *whether* you will be affected, but *when* you will be affected.

The Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners Peer Assistance Program is currently under contract with Professional Recovery Network. Our goal is to identify and assist licensed veterinarians and veterinary students who have job-impairing mental health, medical illness, alcohol, or drug problems so that they may return to competent practice. The Professional Recovery Network is NOT a vigilante team, but acts instead as an advocate to help veterinarians who need help. Our goal is to educate every veterinarian in Texas about the disease of chemical dependency and the painful consequences that can result. Because of the program, there are now scores of veterinarians and families who have been helped and who truly understand our mission. We believe that awareness and education are the keys.

Chemical dependency is an equal-opportunity disease that impacts not only the person abusing drugs or alcohol, but also those around them. We urge you to take advantage of the opportunity to educate yourself, your staff, and your family, by inviting a Peer Assistance Representative to speak at your next VMA Meeting. As a veterinarian, as an employer, and as a human being, you have the right to demand a drug-free workplace.

Professional Recovery Network (PRN) is a nationally recognized peer assistance program operated with strict confidentiality. PRN's goal is to help participants get the assistance they need so they can remain employed in veterinary medicine. The 24-hour helpline number is 800-727-5152. Calls made after 5 p.m. will be returned the next business morning. In case of emergency, please call 512-496-7247.

For more information about PRN and what they do, please visit: <http://www.txprn.com>