



acqua recovery™



HOW TO GET ADDICTION TREATMENT & KEEP YOUR JOB



The reality is, addiction does not discriminate. Some of the world's most successful people have struggled with addiction along the way, or continue to do so. It's a vicious cycle: Work stress can trigger the urge to self-medicate with drugs or alcohol; at the same time, drug and alcohol abuse cause more problems for you at work. You may fear losing your job if you take time off to get help; but if you don't get help soon, you could lose your job.

If you've been trapped, battling that back and forth thinking, you can stop right now. It's possible to keep your job and save your career while getting help for addiction that can save your life.

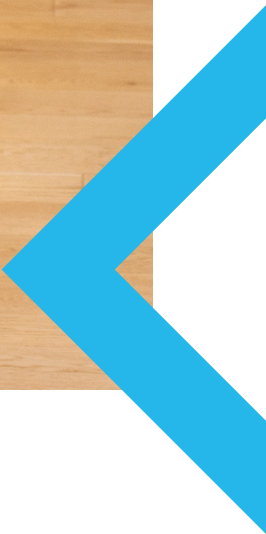
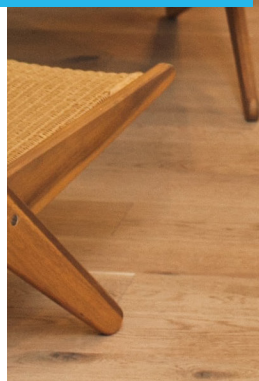
HERE'S HOW.

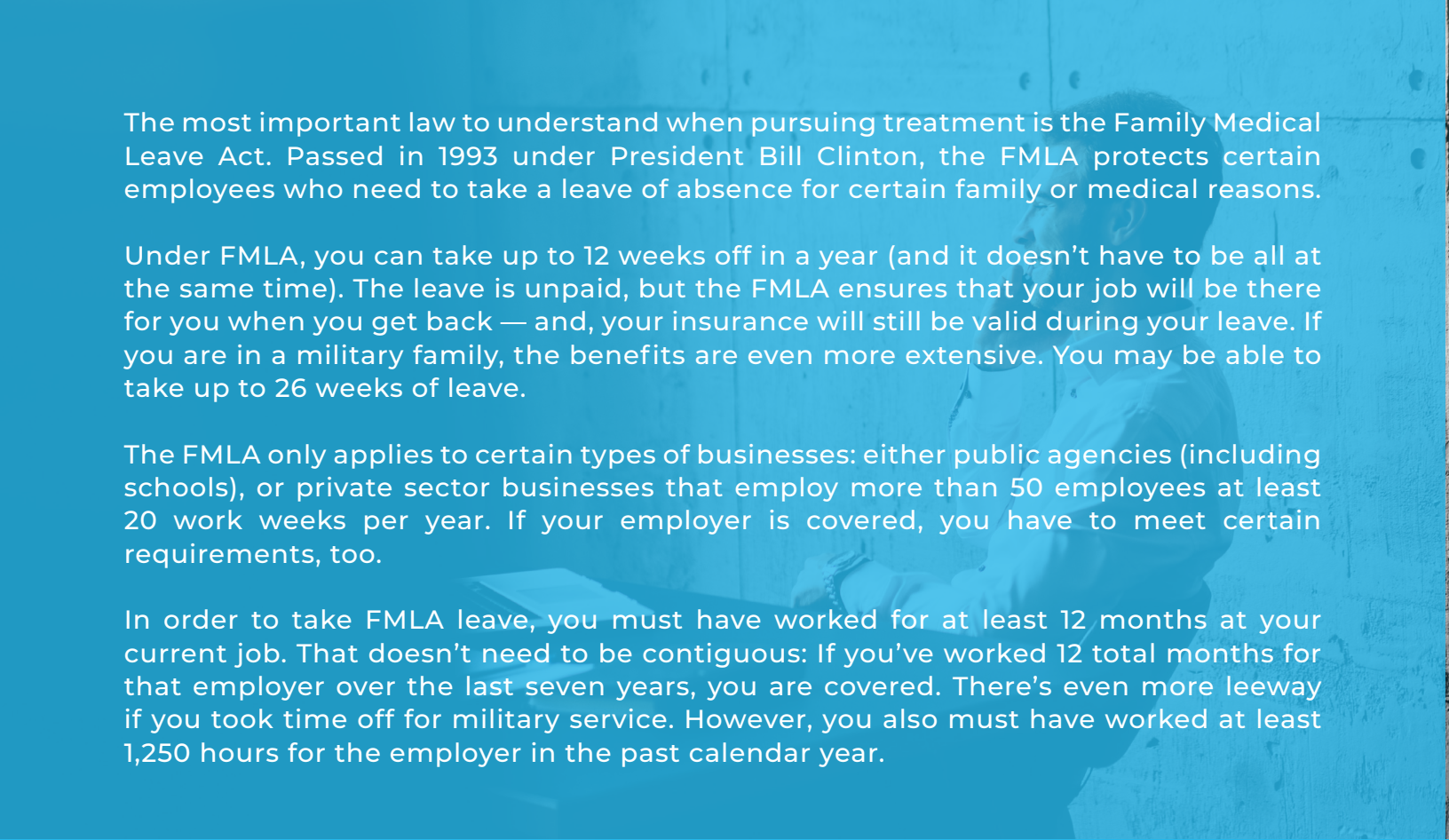
If you are struggling with addiction and trying to hold down a job, you're not alone. Recent studies have found that the rate of substance abuse among full-time workers 18 to 64 is nearly 10%. In certain industries, that can be even higher. In food services, for example, nearly 17% of employees abuse substances. Another study found that 21% of attorneys are problem drinkers.



BE PROACTIVE.

Your employer is legally allowed to terminate you if substance abuse is affecting your performance at work. However, if you proactively seek help for your addiction, it changes the power dynamic. In most cases, the law protects people who are getting professional treatment for addiction. Paradoxically, leaving work to go to residential addiction treatment could be the thing that saves your career. Knowledge is power, so explore your options and make the decision to seek help before it's too late.





The most important law to understand when pursuing treatment is the Family Medical Leave Act. Passed in 1993 under President Bill Clinton, the FMLA protects certain employees who need to take a leave of absence for certain family or medical reasons.

Under FMLA, you can take up to 12 weeks off in a year (and it doesn't have to be all at the same time). The leave is unpaid, but the FMLA ensures that your job will be there for you when you get back — and, your insurance will still be valid during your leave. If you are in a military family, the benefits are even more extensive. You may be able to take up to 26 weeks of leave.

The FMLA only applies to certain types of businesses: either public agencies (including schools), or private sector businesses that employ more than 50 employees at least 20 work weeks per year. If your employer is covered, you have to meet certain requirements, too.

In order to take FMLA leave, you must have worked for at least 12 months at your current job. That doesn't need to be contiguous: If you've worked 12 total months for that employer over the last seven years, you are covered. There's even more leeway if you took time off for military service. However, you also must have worked at least 1,250 hours for the employer in the past calendar year.



WHAT IS THE FMLA?

If you meet all of those requirements, you may be able to take FMLA leave for addiction treatment. Addiction is a condition that is covered FMLA, but the law is specific when it comes to the type of treatment that is covered. You can't just take time off to detox at home and go to 12 Step meetings. Rather, you must pursue treatment that includes overnight stay in a medical facility, such as residential addiction treatment.

Your employer may even require that the facility provide proof that you are receiving treatment, but they're limited in what they are allowed to know. Health privacy laws prevent your direct supervisor from contacting the facility, and they cannot share detailed information about your status or treatment. As a patient, your right to privacy is well-protected. You only need to provide enough information for them to know that the FMLA applies to your situation.

You must give notice to your employer that you intend to take FMLA leave for your absence as soon as possible, and they must approve it within five days.

Once you complete treatment, the FMLA ensures that your employer must return you to the same position, or one with the same work schedule, location, responsibilities, pay, and benefits.



WHAT IS THE ADA?



Speaking of benefits, there is another important law that applies to addiction treatment. Passed in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, protects people with disabilities — including addiction.

Under the ADA, alcoholism is a disability and you are protected from discriminating behavior, whether your abuse is past or present. For example, if your boss thinks you drink too much at work happy hours, they cannot fire you or demote you unless it's affecting your job. If your drinking is affecting your job, your boss has the right to discipline you just like any other employee. But, if you seek treatment for your alcoholism, that is not grounds for dismissal. In fact, at that point you may be able to take FMLA leave.

Drugs are treated differently under the ADA. When it comes to illegal substances, you are only protected if your abuse is behind you and you're in recovery. You cannot actively consume controlled substances and keep your job without fear — unless that substance is legally prescribed.



WHAT ARE EAPS?

As you can see, proactively seeking help for your addiction puts you in a much better position legally than waiting around until consequences catch up to you. If you're ready to seek help, you might find it right at work.

Ask your manager or HR rep if your company has an EAP, or "Employee Assistance Program." Such programs are often part and parcel of benefits packages at large companies.

EAPs can act as your guide and advocate in finding treatment. They may give you resources to help deal with your addiction, or point you in the direction of an addiction treatment facility that will take your company's insurance. They may even be willing to explain your situation to your boss so you don't have to.





HAVING THE CONVERSATION

If an EAP isn't an option, you may be faced with the prospect of advising your boss of your decision to seek treatment. Although such a conversation may loom large mentally, it's important to understand that it doesn't have to be a big deal.



While it is important to tell your boss your plans so that you are legally protected, you only need to share the bare minimum of information with them: i.e., the fact that you are receiving treatment for addiction. If you think you can't handle the conversation in person, an email is completely sufficient. But remember, you have nothing to be ashamed of. Addiction is a disease, and employers are used to seeing it at work. Ultimately, they want you to get well so they can have you back at work healthy and happy. If they don't, it might not be the right place for you anyways.



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866.830.4628

WE CAN HELP



If you need someone to lean on as you explore your options and sketch out your plan for treatment, our team is here to help. Many of our employees have gone through the same process, and can even handle communications with your boss or HR team for you.

At Acqua Recovery, you'll find a true sanctuary for healing, where you can relax, refresh, and renew your hope for the life you'd once imagined. We'll help you get there.

