



Guidebook



Spreading Peer Support Across LIUNA

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Introduction

At the Laborers' Health & Safety Fund of North America, we've always believed that LIUNA and its signatory partners have the power to protect our LIUNA Brothers and Sisters and better the lives of members and their families.

That mission doesn't stop at the jobsite. It extends into our homes, our communities and the challenges we all face every day. Some struggles are visible, while others are harder to see. Too often, out of fear, stigma or simply not knowing where to turn, our members carry those burdens alone.

To grow LIUNA to one million members strong, we must be there for one another – not just on the job, but in life's toughest moments too. Solidarity and community are pillars of Laborers Rising, and they embody what it means to be part of this union. **When we show up for each other, we don't just ease someone's burden – we strengthen our union from within.**

On behalf of the LHSFNA and its staff, we are grateful to General President and LHSFNA Labor Co-Chair Booker, General Secretary-Treasurer Sabitoni, LHSFNA Management Co-Chair Rampone and our Board of Trustees for their support in the Fund's launch of LEAN LIUNA. They recognize that LEAN programs and the peer support they provide have the power to create lasting, positive change in the lives of members and their families.

The power to protect is a responsibility we all share, and the LHSFNA will work hand in hand with every LIUNA Region to ensure no member faces their struggles alone. Because Laborers look out for their own – on the job, at home and especially when it matters most.

In solidarity,



Lisa M. Sabitoni
Executive Director
Laborers' Health & Safety Fund of North America



Introducing LEAN LIUNA

When LIUNA members and their families are facing life's toughest challenges, support from someone who understands can make all the difference. That's why the LHSFNA developed **LEAN LIUNA** (Laborers Escaping Adversity Now), a peer support program built by Laborers, for Laborers.

This guide is designed to help LIUNA affiliates integrate peer support into their organizations. It outlines four levels of peer support programming, offering flexible options to meet the unique needs of each affiliate and the members they serve.



The Case for Peer Support

Every day, many of our LIUNA Brothers, Sisters and their families face mental health struggles, financial hardship or other challenges that impact their well-being. While millions of adults and children across the U.S. and Canada face these same issues, the construction industry and many other sectors where LIUNA members work are disproportionately impacted:

- ▶ Approximately 15% of construction workers have a **substance use disorder** (SUD), compared to 8.5% of the general population.
- ▶ The **suicide rate** for the construction industry is **four times higher** than the general population.
- ▶ In 2022, there were over 1,000 workplace fatalities in the construction industry. Over **5,000 construction workers died by suicide** that same year.

“Peer support programs are the epitome of Laborers Rising. When we take care of our own, we build power and we make a real difference in the lives of our Brothers and Sisters.”

Brent Booker
LIUNA General President and LHSFNA Co-Chair

What Are LEAN Programs?

LEAN programs provide LIUNA members and their dependents with peer support and other available resources to help them overcome adversity related to behavioral health issues, mental health issues or other challenges that threaten their overall well-being. LEAN programs can also help members take full advantage of the healthcare benefits available to them, navigate coverage-related issues and get connected with the right kind of provider for their needs.

LEAN programs can be run at a Regional level, District Council level, through a Local Union or LIUNA health and welfare fund. While the details of the program may differ from one area to another, the goal of all LEAN programs is the same – to connect LIUNA members and their families with help when they need it most.



Benefits of LEAN Programs

▶ Peer Support & Credibility

Members receive guidance from fellow Laborers who have firsthand experience with life's challenges, making it easier to build trust and encourage open conversations.

▶ Reduced Stigma

The program normalizes seeking help by showing that others in the trade have faced similar struggles and successfully recovered. Knowing that Peer Specialists are also Laborers reassures members that they won't be judged.

▶ Personalized Guidance

Dedicated Peer Specialists help members navigate the healthcare system, ensuring they access the right resources without unnecessary barriers.

▶ Stronger Support Systems

A big part of overcoming adversity is having people in your corner. By checking in and offering continuous support, specialists help members stay on track toward long-term success.

▶ Workforce Retention & Well-Being

Addressing addiction and other issues helps keep skilled Laborers on the job, supporting their overall well-being and ensuring they can continue to provide for their families.

Research from the National Safety Council (NSC) and other organizations estimates that **every \$1 invested in treating and supporting common mental health issues translates to a return of \$4 in improved worker health and productivity.** LEAN programs also help lower overall medical and disability expenses while reducing turnover-related costs such as recruitment and training.

As LIUNA continues its march to a million members, existing and future members will all benefit greatly from LEAN programs, peer support and being part of an organization that takes care of its own.



The LHSFNA's Role in LEAN LIUNA

Through LEAN LIUNA, the LHSFNA is committed to helping LIUNA Regions and their affiliates establish, expand and sustain their own LEAN programs. As part of this effort, the LHSFNA has formed several groups to provide oversight, assistance and support across the LEAN LIUNA network, including an advisory committee, a response team and dedicated support networks for peer specialists and support group leaders. By integrating these programs within existing structures and resources, we ensure that every LIUNA member in every LIUNA Region has access to peer support when they need it.



Understanding LEAN: Four Levels of Support

Before launching a LEAN program, it's important to assess your organization's needs and determine the best approach. LEAN LIUNA offers four levels of peer support programming, each designed to provide meaningful assistance to LIUNA members and their dependents.

This guide will walk you through the four LEAN program levels, outlining their structure, benefits and key considerations. As you review each level, think about your organization's existing resources, workforce needs and long-term goals.

When it comes to providing LEAN support, the LHSFNA encourages you to start where you can today and build on that success. The four LEAN Levels build on one another, allowing for growth and development of peer support programming over time.

After exploring a brief overview of the options, you'll be guided through the next steps to select the level that works best for your organization and implement it effectively.

Let's get started.

The Four Levels of LEAN

A Level 2 LEAN program involves starting a dedicated peer support group at a Local Union or other LIUNA entity. A volunteer will lead this effort with support from leadership.

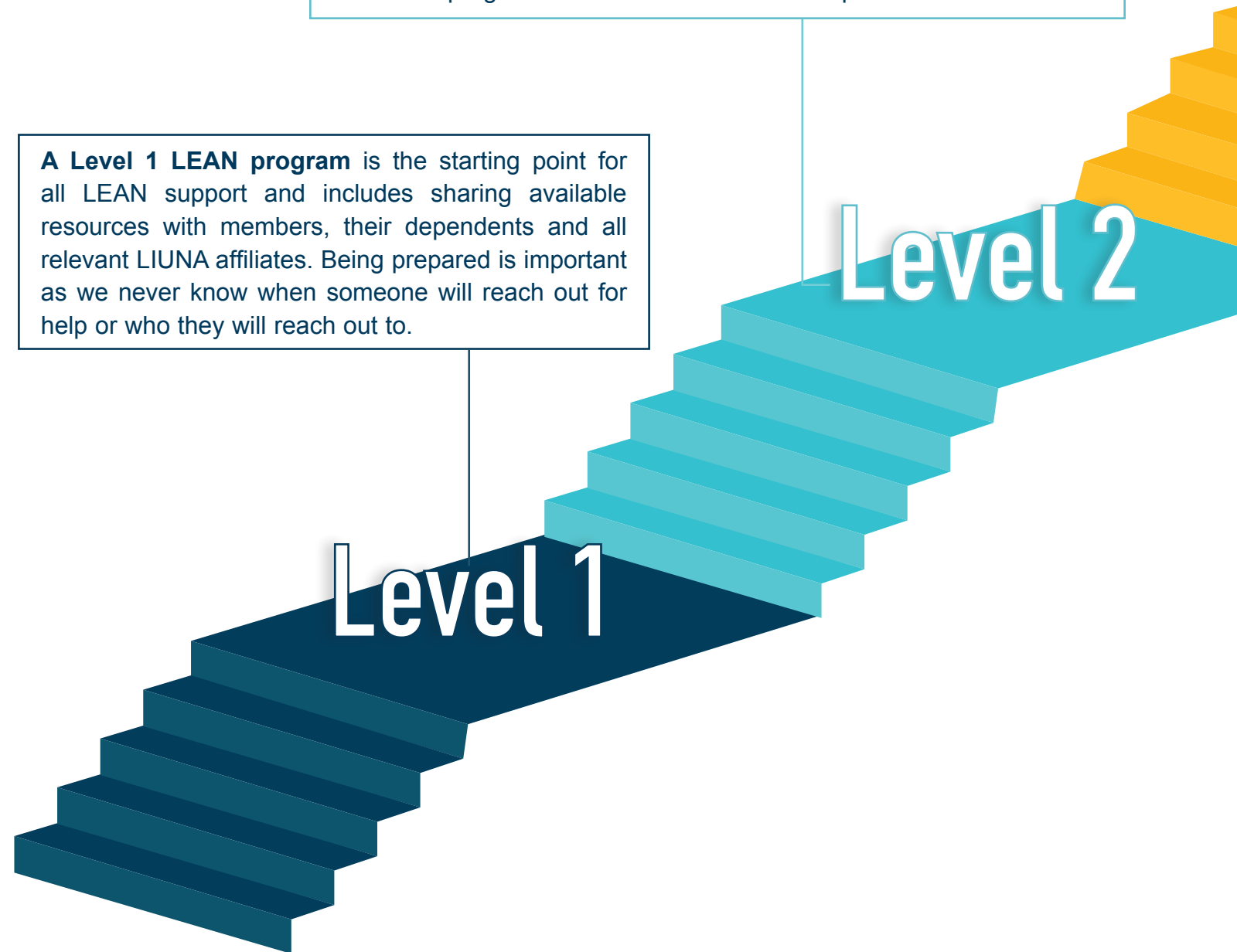
The group can provide support for any issue(s) and doesn't have to focus on SUDs. Support groups can be developed for LIUNA members, their families or both groups.

A Level 2 program should also include the steps detailed in Level 1.

A Level 1 LEAN program is the starting point for all LEAN support and includes sharing available resources with members, their dependents and all relevant LIUNA affiliates. Being prepared is important as we never know when someone will reach out for help or who they will reach out to.

Level 1

Level 2





Level 3

A Level 3 LEAN program uses Peer Support Specialists to engage with members and their dependents in need of assistance. Because a Level 3 LEAN program does not have the same financial support as a Level 4 program, Peer Support Specialists will carry out their LEAN role in a volunteer or part-time capacity, which may be in addition to their regular job duties. Depending on need and utilization, a Level 4 program may become advisable in the future.

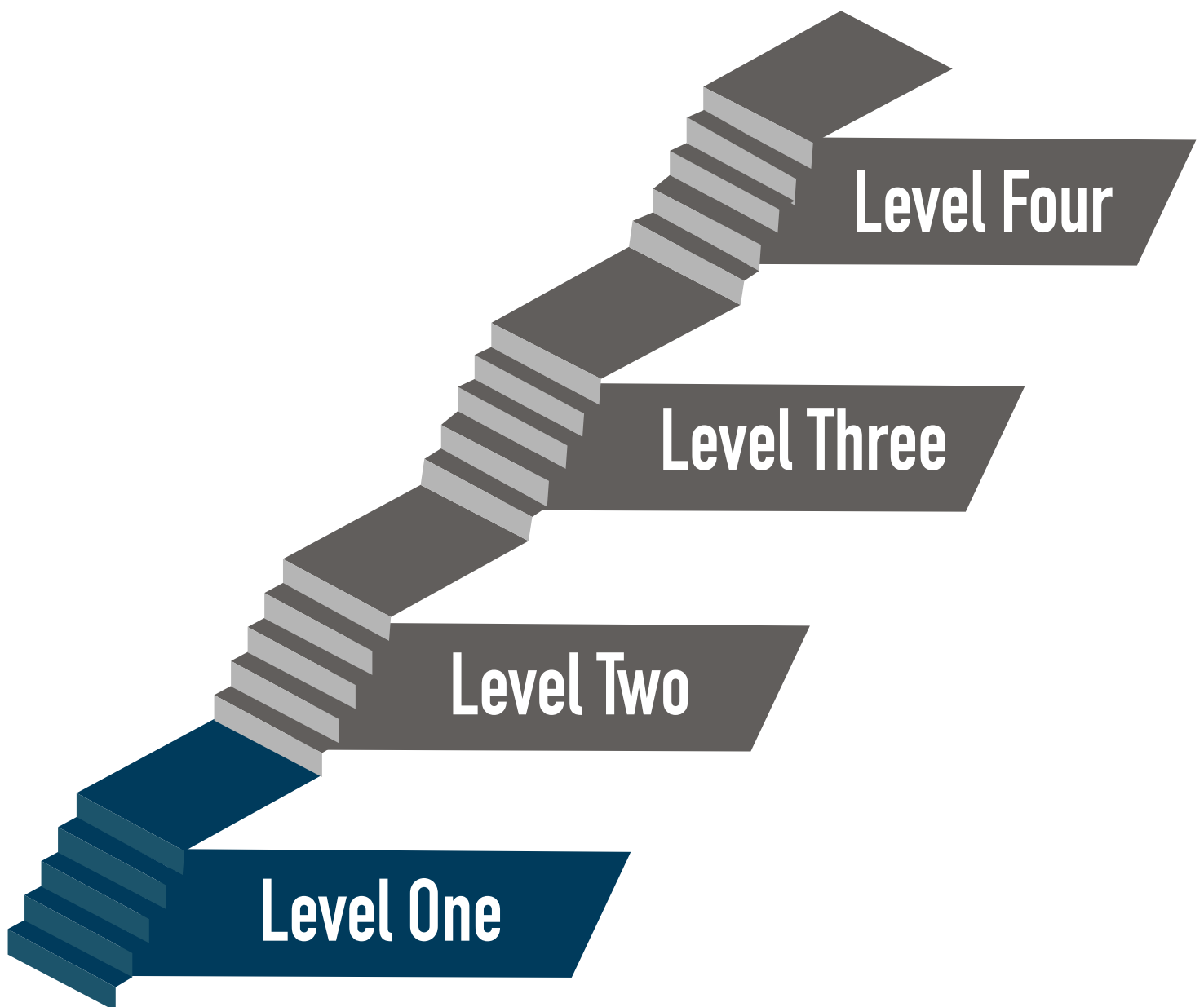
A Level 3 program also includes the commitments detailed in Level 2 and Level 1.

Level 4

A Level 4 LEAN program is the most comprehensive and includes hiring Peer Support Specialists whose full-time job will be to assist LIUNA members and their dependents. A Level 4 program will require behavioral health benefits to be available through applicable LIUNA health and welfare funds. An EAP is strongly recommended.

A Level 4 program also includes the commitments detailed in Level 2 and Level 1.

Level 1: Sharing Resources Across LIUNA



A Level 1 LEAN program is the foundation of peer support within LIUNA. This level focuses on gathering, organizing and distributing available mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) resources to LIUNA members, their dependents and affiliates.

Why Start Here?

It can be hard to reach out for help, and many people who need support hesitate to ask for it. When a LIUNA member or their dependent reaches out, we must be ready to connect them with the right resources immediately. Level 1 ensures that essential information is easy to find and readily accessible when it's needed most.

Key Benefits of Level 1

- ✓ **Increases awareness**
Ensures members and their dependents know where to find help.
- ✓ **Reduces barriers**
Provides direct access to resources without requiring members to ask.
- ✓ **Encourages early intervention**
Helps prevent crises by making support easily available.
- ✓ **Lays the foundation**
Serves as a stepping stone for building more advanced LEAN programs.



Cost Considerations

There are many ways to share this information with LIUNA affiliates, members and signatory contractors. Depending on the number of people you need to reach and which method(s) you choose, **estimated costs start at \$2,000 and go up from there.**

What Resources Should Be Shared?

At a minimum, gather and share the following resources as part of a Level 1 program:

- ✓ Applicable LIUNA Health & Welfare Fund(s) information
 - Phone number(s) and website(s)
 - Employee or Member Assistance Program information
 - Mental health benefit information
 - Substance use disorder benefit information
 - Peer support resources
- ✓ Local resources
- ✓ National resources



If your organization is not currently sharing resources, this is a simple yet impactful way to get started. Level 1 is a foundational step that makes a big impact with minimal effort.

If your organization already shares the above resources, take a moment to assess whether there are additional strategies in this section you could implement to strengthen your efforts and reach even more members and their dependents.



Ways to Get the Word Out on Available Resources

Consider distributing resources across multiple channels, such as Local Union halls, jobsite trailers and LIUNA affiliate websites.

1

Create a Local Mental Health Resource Page

Include key contact information for available local and national resources. A sample version of this document is included on page 36.

2

Organize Presentations & Stand Downs

Work with LIUNA affiliates (e.g., training centers) and signatory contractors to get in front of members and tell them about available resources in person.

3

Use Branded Products

Branded items such as coffee cups, wristbands, hard hard stickers, poker chips, magnets or other items can help get the name of the program and phone number into the hands of members and family members. Get creative!

4

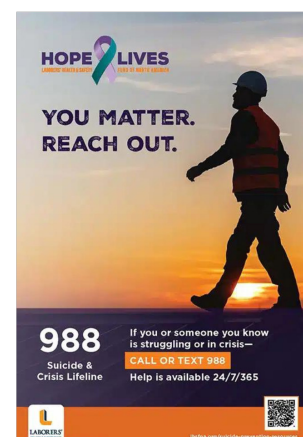
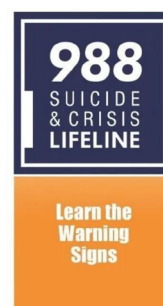
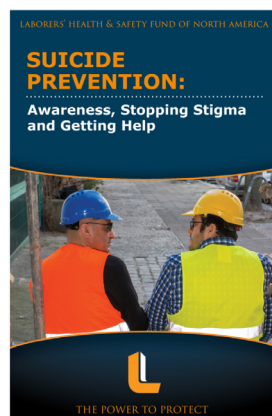
Utilize Social Media

Social media platforms are an effective way to share information and promote resources without incurring additional costs. Share resources using eye-catching graphics, pinned posts and by adding contact information to social channel bios.

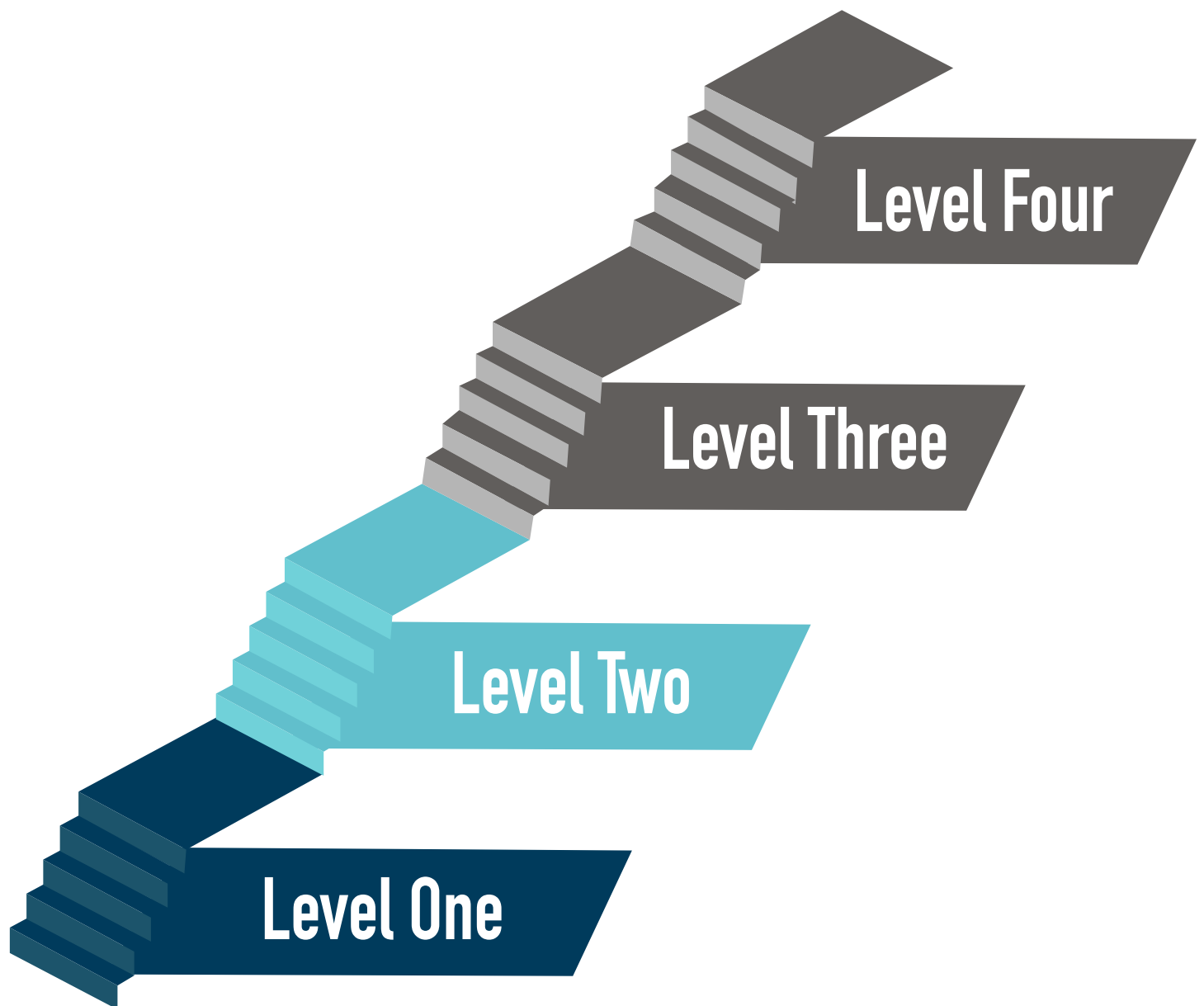
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Distribute Educational Materials and Guides

The LHSFNA has many existing publications on behavioral health, mental health, well-being and other related topics to supplement program materials and help begin conversations.



Level 2: Peer Support Groups



A Level 2 LEAN program involves starting a dedicated peer support group at a Local Union or other LIUNA entity. A volunteer leader, with support from leadership, will guide this effort. The group can provide support for any issue(s) and does not need to focus solely on SUDs.

A Level 2 program should also include the steps outlined in Level 1.

What Is a Peer Support Group?

A peer support group brings together people with similar experiences, illnesses or circumstances to share their struggles, give advice, provide encouragement and foster a supportive community. The trust and credibility built through shared experiences can help overcome the stigma often associated with reaching out for help.



“It’s not always easy to reach out for help. Finding understanding from peers who’ve had similar experiences can be a lifeline in navigating life’s struggles. Peer support shows our Brothers and Sisters that LIUNA cares and supports them in good times and bad.”

**Michael F. Sabitoni
LIUNA General Secretary-Treasurer
and LHSFNA Trustee**



Key Benefits of Level 2

Peer support groups led by LIUNA members, for LIUNA members can provide:



Connection via the industry:

Construction has a culture all its own. Having support groups led by Laborers who understand the industry makes it easier to connect with members.



Trust and relatability:

Peers who have walked a similar path bring a level of trust and relatability that can be challenging to find elsewhere. Members value support from someone who has been in their shoes.



Personalized support:

Members can share practical advice and emotional support based on firsthand experience. Members may be more open to hearing this information from a peer than a medical professional.



Success stories and role models:

Seeing others make progress can be immensely motivating, providing hope and encouragement for what lies ahead.



Safe space:

Support groups provide a confidential environment where members can express themselves without fear of judgment.



Sense of normalcy:

Talking to others who have faced similar struggles lets members know they are not alone and what they are feeling is normal.



Improved well-being:

Sharing experiences in a group setting can reduce anxiety, improve self-esteem and help members' sense of well-being overall.



Connection to resources:

Support group leaders can provide members with information about available LIUNA resources and local resources.

Cost Considerations

Starting a peer support group can be a relatively easy and affordable way to create community and meet people's needs.

Annual costs for running a peer support group are estimated between **\$2,500** and **\$10,000** depending on the frequency of meetings and the number of attendees. Key costs include:

- 💰 Overhead cost such as renting a meeting space, if needed
- 💰 Providing food or refreshments
- 💰 Bringing in professional external presenters
- 💰 Marketing and outreach (e.g., branded swag)

LHSFNA Assistance for Peer Support Groups

The LHSFNA maintains a working group of peer support group leaders across LIUNA to help them share best practices, challenges and ideas.

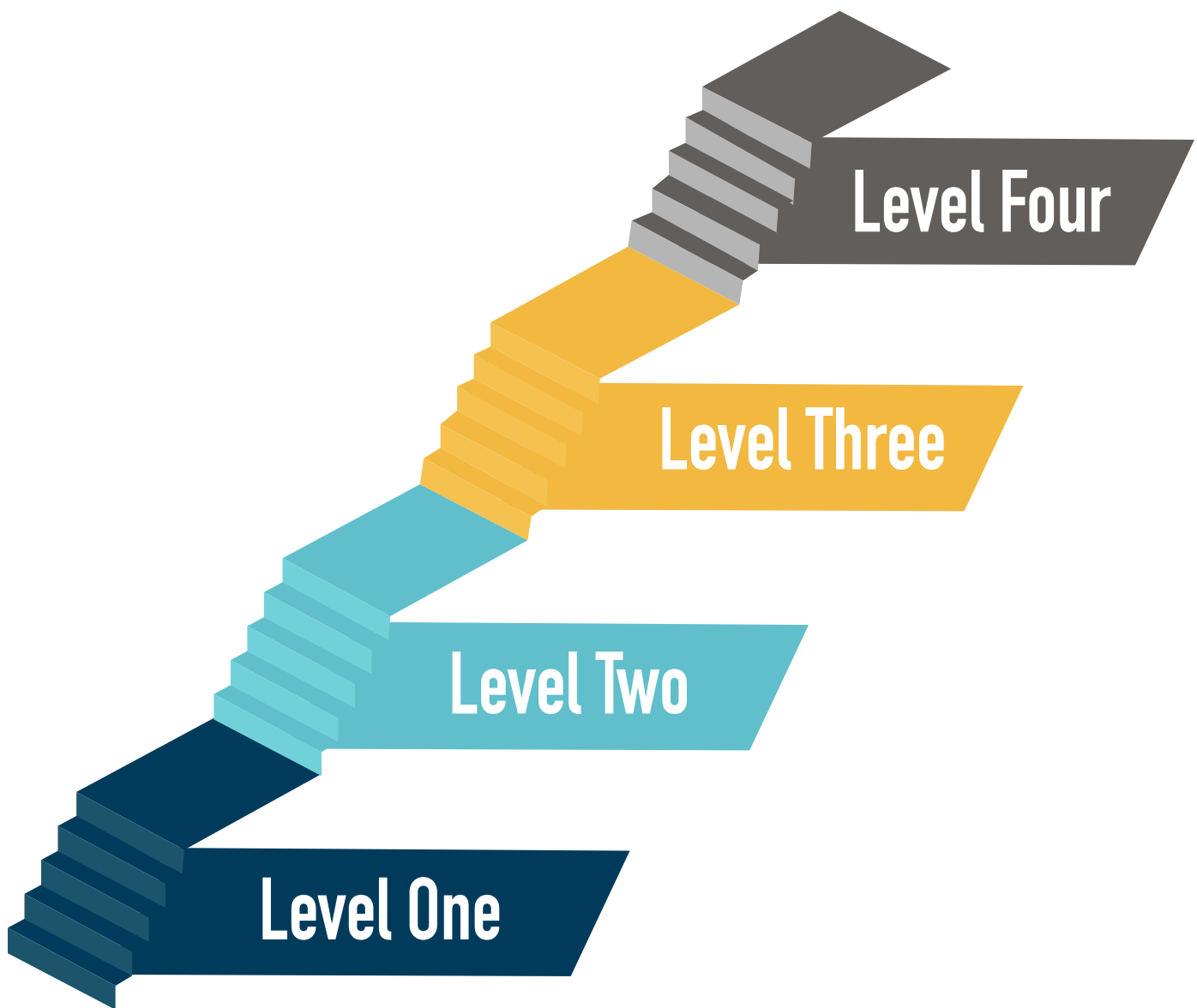
“The response we’ve received since starting this peer support group in Portland has been amazing. Responding with action and service when someone needs help is exactly what LIUNA stands for, and I’m so proud to be part of it.”

Lori Baumann
LIUNA Local 737

For additional guidance on setting up a peer support group, refer to the detailed steps provided on page 37 in the Resources section at the end of this guide.



Level 3: LEAN Program with Part-Time Staff or Volunteers



A **Level 3 LEAN program** provides support through Peer Support Specialists who engage with members and their dependents in need of assistance. Due to limited financial support, these Peer Support Specialists typically work in a volunteer or part-time capacity, which may be in addition to their regular job duties. A Level 3 program is a flexible alternative when resources for a full-time program are unavailable, or when geography makes a full program unfeasible. If demand increases, a Level 4 program could become advisable.

A Level 3 program also includes the commitments detailed in Level 1 and Level 2.

Approaches to Assisting Members

▶ **Volunteer Peer Support Specialists**

Typically, these are individuals already providing informal peer support on their own and are a “go to” person for support on their jobsite or within their Local Union. One benefit of this option is that there is no cap on the number of volunteers, offering flexibility and scalability.

▶ **Part-time Peer Support Specialists**

When funding for full-time staff isn’t available or practical, a part-time role or stipend may allow for a Level 3 Peer Specialist to be fairly compensated for their time.

▶ **Use of a phone hotline and/or email**

While it’s preferred for peer support to be available 24/7, the use of an 800 number with a voice mailbox and a dedicated email inbox can also be used to receive requests for assistance outside of work hours. When multiple volunteers or part-time staff have access to these systems, support can then be triaged based on availability.

Cost Considerations

Total program costs are roughly estimated to be between **\$5,000 to \$15,000**, making this a suitable option when resources are limited. Starting a Level 3 program lays a strong foundation for future growth toward Level 4.

Key Benefits of Level 3

✓ **Flexibility**

Allows for peer support programs even when full-time funding isn’t available.

✓ **Scalability**

Can grow into a Level 4 program if demand and resources increase.

✓ **Community-Driven**

Builds on existing informal peer networks and strengthens connections within LIUNA.

Considerations for Peer Specialists in a Level 3 Program

⚡ **Burnout Risk**

Balancing their LEAN role and personal time may strain a person's workload and affect their well-being. Clear boundaries must be set.

⚡ **Impact on Job Duties**

Given the volunteer or part-time status, Peer Specialists may need flexibility with job duties, especially if support is needed during work hours.

⚡ **Conflicts of Interest**

When Peer Specialists have dual roles (e.g., steward, foreperson, Business Agent), it may be difficult to maintain boundaries or balance responsibilities.

⚡ **Lack of Formal Training**

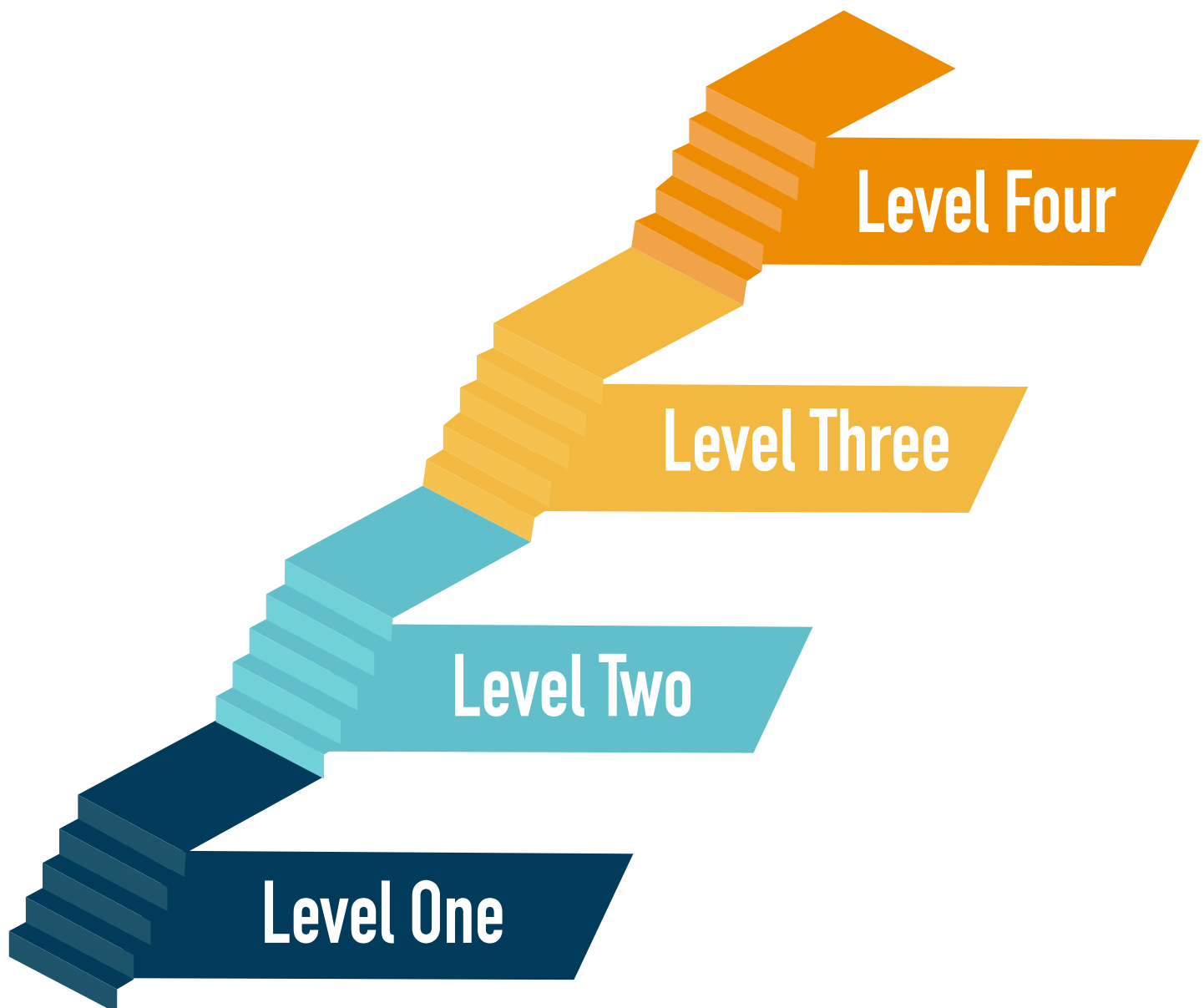
Volunteers or part-time staff may lack formal training initially. Providing training resources will be crucial for success.



Implementing a Level 3 program provides an opportunity to expand support services while maintaining flexibility based on regional needs and resources. Prioritizing training resources and structured support will be key to success, ensuring that volunteers or part-time staff can effectively assist members in need.

Additional resources, including a Peer Support Specialist job description, can be found in the Resources section on page 38. For more guidance on recommended training, refer to the Certification, Training and Support section at the end of this guidebook.

Level 4: Full LEAN Program



A Level 4 LEAN program is the most comprehensive, and includes hiring Peer Support Specialists whose full-time job will be to assist LIUNA members and their dependents. A Level 4 program will require behavioral health benefits to be available through applicable LIUNA health and welfare funds. An EAP is strongly recommended.

A Level 4 program also includes the commitments detailed in Level 2 and Level 1.

Cost Considerations

Estimated annual costs to run a Level 4 LEAN program are between **\$300,000** and **\$400,000**, depending on geography and the number of Peer Support Specialists hired.

A portion of these costs include the following:

- 💰 Office space
- 💰 Technology needs, including computers, cell phones and a 24/7 phone line that directs calls to staff
- 💰 Training
- 💰 Professional memberships and subscriptions
- 💰 Professional conferences
- 💰 Business cards
- 💰 Mileage reimbursement
- 💰 Insurance/liability requirements, if any

Key Benefits of Level 4

- ✓ **Full-Time, Dedicated Support**
Peer Support Specialists are available around the clock, ensuring continuous access to assistance and crisis intervention for LIUNA members and their dependents.
- ✓ **Proactive Outreach & Engagement**
Full-time staff can actively connect with members, increasing program awareness, utilization and overall effectiveness.
- ✓ **Comprehensive Coordination**
Specialists collaborate with LIUNA health and welfare funds, EAPs and external resources to provide seamless support and referrals.
- ✓ **Long-Term Sustainability**
With structured funding and dedicated personnel, Level 4 programs can provide stable, long-term support to members and their families.

Hiring of Peer Specialists

At least two full-time Peer Specialists are required for a successful Level 4 program. There are several reasons for this:

- ✓ Calls can be routed to Peer Specialists 24/7 and they must be available when members are in crisis. The 24/7 nature of the job demands more than one person.
- ✓ Peer Specialists often use one another as a form of support, consultation and debriefing.
- ✓ Different members may respond best to different communication styles.



Peer Specialist Role & Responsibilities

- ▶ **Primary Contact:**
Assist Laborers and their families struggling with substance use, mental health and other life stressors.
- ▶ **Worksite Education:**
Train Laborers on Narcan use, addiction recovery and available support services.
- ▶ **Referral Network:**
Develop a network of volunteer peer specialists in each Local Union.
- ▶ **Facilitation:**
Connect members with counseling, support groups and treatment programs as needed.
- ▶ **Case Management:**
Follow up with participants throughout the process and provide continued support.

Additional resources, such as a sample Peer Specialist job description and position qualifications, can be found on page 38.

Proper training and certification are essential for LEAN Peer Specialists. A detailed guide to certification programs, recommended training and ongoing support can be found in the Certification, Training and Support section.

Additional Program Elements



Coordinating Summary Plan Description (SPD) Changes

The LEAN Committee will work with health and welfare fund staff to ensure plan documents are updated to reflect the LEAN program. Sample plan language can be found on page 38.



Understanding Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or Member Assistance Program (MAP) Resources

An EAP or MAP's services are an important component of the resources that will be available to LIUNA members seeking assistance through the LEAN program. Because of this, a robust and engaged EAP/MAP is strongly recommended.

An EAP/MAP can provide many of the following services to LIUNA members and their dependents:

- ✓ Counseling services
- ✓ Legal and financial assistance
- ✓ Work-life balance resources
- ✓ Substance abuse support
- ✓ Assistance with failed drug tests
- ✓ Training and workshops
- ✓ Critical incident response

The LHSFNA can assist LIUNA health and welfare funds with conducting an EAP/MAP Request for Proposal (RFP) in the event one is not already in place.



Key Differences Between Level 3 and Level 4 Programs

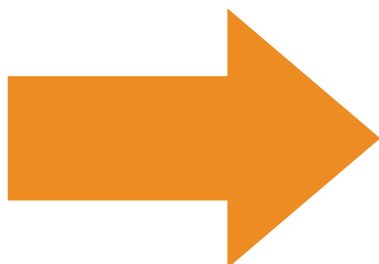
After establishing a foundation with Levels 1 and 2, organizations looking to expand their peer support program can take different approaches. Levels 3 and 4 both provide structured, ongoing support, but they differ in scope and implementation.

The chart below highlights the key distinctions between these two advanced levels to help you determine which model best fits your organization's needs and resources.

Level 3 Program	Level 4 Program
Volunteer or part-time Peer Specialists	Full-time, paid Peer Specialists
Flexible, lower-cost model for Regions with fewer resources	Comprehensive program with 24/7 availability
Costs range between \$5,000 - \$15,000 a year	Estimated costs of \$300,000 - \$400,000 a year
Peer support provided through phone/ email support (potentially after hours)	24/7 direct access to Peer Specialists
Limited training and support	Extensive, ongoing training and professional development for Peer Specialists

Choosing the Right Approach

Now that you've reviewed an overview of each LEAN level, the next section breaks down the structure, benefits and key considerations for each level to help you determine the best fit for your organization.



LEAN Program Roadmap: **Plan, Assess and Choose**

Starting a LEAN program may seem like a big undertaking at first, but the key is to **start where you can today and build on that success.**

Follow these steps to begin planning, assess your current resources, identify gaps and choose the LEAN level that best aligns with your goals.

Establish a LEAN Committee

A successful LEAN program starts with a dedicated LEAN Committee responsible for planning, decision-making and implementation. This committee should be diverse and representative of key stakeholders to ensure broad support and sustainability.

Recommended LEAN Committee Members:

- ▶ Health and welfare fund administrator(s)
- ▶ Other health and welfare fund staff
- ▶ A labor trustee
- ▶ A management trustee
- ▶ District Council representative
- ▶ Local Union leadership
- ▶ A member or member representative
- ▶ An HR representative (if available)

The LEAN Committee will:

- ✓ Determine which level of LEAN program to implement
- ✓ Seek approval from leadership
- ✓ Develop an implementation plan

Tip: Assign a **chairperson** to oversee the approval and implementation process.

Analyze Existing Programming, Covered Lives and Geographic Area

Before choosing a LEAN program, assess the **current benefits and resources available** to LIUNA members and their dependents. Use the checklist below to gather key information.

Behavioral Health Benefits Assessment:

- ▶ Does your LIUNA health and welfare fund(s) provide the following and what is the coverage/cost for each?
 - ☐ Mental health benefits?
 - ☐ Substance use recovery benefits?
 - ☐ Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)?
 - ☐ A Member Assistance Program (MAP) or Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?
- ▶ What peer support programming, if any, is already in place?

Utilization & Coverage Analysis:

- ▶ What is the current **utilization** of behavioral health benefits? *(This will serve as a benchmark for evaluating program success.)*
- ▶ What is the number of **covered lives**, including members and their dependents?
- ▶ How large of a **geographic area** will be covered by this program? *(If applicable, this will help determine how many LEAN Peer Specialists may be needed.)*

Next step: Use this information to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

Identify Gaps & Consider Additional Benefits

Now that you have a clearer picture of existing resources, determine where gaps exist and how a LEAN program can help fill them.

Consider these key questions:

- ▶ What **behavioral health issues** are most prevalent in your region? (e.g., substance use disorders (SUDs), depression, anxiety, financial stress, work-related stress, caregiving challenges?)
- ▶ Are there **barriers** preventing members from accessing support (stigma, cost, lack of awareness, etc.)?
- ▶ Does your current program address **issues beyond substance use**, such as mental health, financial stress and overall well-being?

Why this matters: While peer programs were initially designed to support members with SUDs, the LHSFNA strongly encourages LEAN programs to expand their focus to mental health and other life stressors to provide more comprehensive support.



Choose a LEAN Level for Your Organization

After assessing your region's needs and resources, it's time to choose the LEAN level that best aligns with your goals. The four LEAN levels differ in scope, resources and commitment, so it's important to select the one that fits your region's current capabilities and long-term vision.

Next Steps:

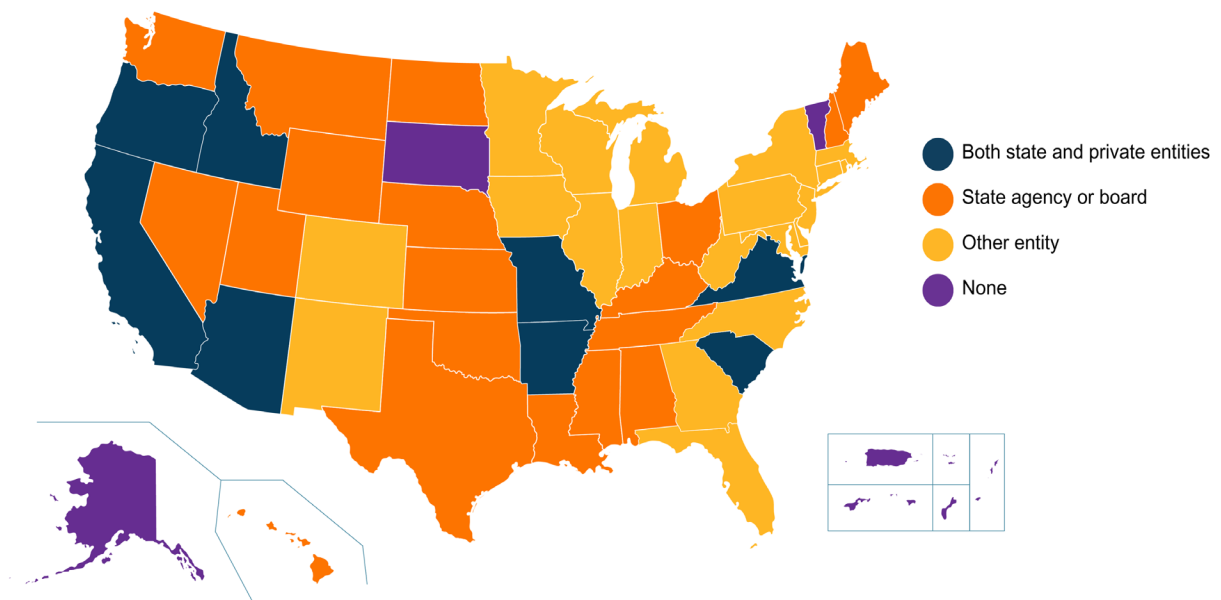
- ▶ **Discuss with leadership:** Make sure all stakeholders understand the resources required for each level and the long-term goals of the program.
- ▶ **Consider scalability:** Start with the level that fits your immediate resources, but plan for growth. If your region cannot commit to Level 3 or 4 yet, focus on Levels 1 and 2, knowing you can scale as the program grows.
- ▶ **Partner with the LHSFNA:** Work with the LHSFNA to access training materials, resources and templates that will help you implement the chosen level effectively.

Certification, Training and Support

Like all LIUNA members, Peer Specialists benefit from specialized training and ongoing education. Training for Peer Specialists may differ based on each state's certification requirements and the resources available within the community. These resources may include local grant-based programs, community-based training through local two- and four-year schools or online courses that meet national standards.

Certification Programs

Peer support certification requirements vary by state. Some states offer certification through non-profit organizations, while others designate a specific board or state agency for certification. The National Conference of State Legislatures maintains a map showing the peer support certification/credentialing authority for each state and territory. It is important to consult with legal counsel to confirm the certification requirements in your state to ensure compliance.



Additional Training

In addition to state certification and community-based training, the LHSFNA recommends that **LEAN Peer Specialists** complete the following supplemental training to ensure they are equipped with the latest skills and best practices. **Peer Support Group Leaders**, while not required to obtain full peer specialist certification, may benefit from training programs such as the Labor Assistance Professional (LAP) certification, which provides valuable guidance on supporting members in need. Other trainings, such as Mental Health First Aid or suicide prevention programs, may also be useful depending on their level of involvement.

Recommended training for Peer Specialists includes:

- ✓ The Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC) Training
- ✓ Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Peer Specialist Course
- ✓ Mental Health First Aid Training from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing
- ✓ LivingWorks ASIST Suicide Intervention Skills Training
- ✓ Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR) Suicide Prevention Training
- ✓ Mental Health America's Workplace Mental Health Training
- ✓ Narcan Administration Training
- ✓ Recovery Coach Training
- ✓ Administrative Skills Training



Coordination from the LHSFNA

The LHSFNA is committed to assisting LIUNA Regions and their affiliates in incorporating LEAN programs and peer support initiatives within existing structures and resources. As part of this effort, the LHSFNA has established several groups to provide oversight, guidance and assistance across the LEAN LIUNA network:

LEAN LIUNA Advisory Committee

The LEAN LIUNA Advisory Committee includes a representative from each of LIUNA's nine Regions, appointed by its Vice President and Regional Manager. These representatives work closely with LHSFNA staff on high-level implementation issues and coordinate with Regional leadership, trustees and key members of LIUNA health and welfare funds.

LEAN LIUNA Response Team

The LEAN LIUNA Response Team includes select LIUNA health and welfare fund professionals, LEAN Peer Specialists and other committed program members. These representatives work closely with LHSFNA staff to provide ongoing feedback from the field on existing LEAN programs and use their expertise to answer specific questions for LIUNA Regions and affiliates seeking to launch LEAN programs.

Looking Out for Peer Specialists and Support Group Leaders

The work of Peer Specialists can be demanding and emotionally taxing. Given the responsibility to provide support during critical moments, it is equally important to ensure the well-being of Peer Specialists and Support Group Leaders.



Network for LEAN Peer Specialists

To excel at their jobs, LEAN Peer Specialists must be able to vary their approach with LIUNA members and their family members depending on the situation and circumstances. In these difficult moments, it can be beneficial to share questions and gather advice from other peer specialists on how they might approach a certain situation.

The LHSFNA connects LEAN Peer Specialists across all LIUNA Regions to facilitate these conversations. By openly sharing their challenges and successes, our network of LEAN Peer Specialists can benefit from the experience and training of their peers.

Network for LEAN Support Group Leaders

Similar to LEAN Peer Specialists, leaders of LEAN support groups can also face difficult conversations and circumstances that make it beneficial to talk to fellow support group leaders. The LHSFNA will connect LEAN support group leaders with one another to facilitate these vital conversations.

Self-Care and Burnout Prevention

Maintaining personal well-being is critical for Peer Specialists and Support Group Leaders to sustain their ability to support others effectively. Practicing self-care, maintaining boundaries and recognizing personal limits can help prevent burnout. The LHSFNA will provide self-care resources available as part of our **Blueprint for Balance** program.

Additional Skill Development

The LHSFNA will develop additional programs and training as needed to further assist Peer Specialists and Support Group Leaders.



LEAN in Action:
Success Stories
from the Field

A History of Peer Support within LIUNA

While LEAN LIUNA is new, peer support within LIUNA already exists in some areas, and it's shown excellent results.

In 2018, the Massachusetts Laborers' Health and Welfare Fund (MLBF) launched the first version of a LEAN program to help members struggling with substance use disorders, primarily related to opioids. Because people struggling with addiction need a support system just as much as they need treatment, the MLBF also hired Labor Recovery Specialists. These specialists were all Laborers in the field who had prior experience with addiction. They also worked to reduce stigma by letting members know it's okay to ask for help.

"As a Laborer, all you have is your name and your work ethic," says Jonathan Ashwell, Peer Recovery Specialist. "A lot of people don't come forward because they're afraid to taint one of those. Letting the member know that we're in recovery too helps remove that stigma."

Similarly, the St. Louis Laborers' Health & Welfare Fund started a pilot program to help members facing addiction in 2017, and hired two full-time peer support specialists in 2023. Now, when a member calls in for help, they talk to a fellow LIUNA member who understands what they're going through, helps them navigate the healthcare system and follows up with them during their journey to long-term recovery.

"My job is to provide support as someone who really understands what these members and their families are going through," says Jonathan Ashwell, Peer Recovery Specialist. "When I call a member who is struggling and they realize I'm a Laborer too, it goes a long way to establish credibility with that person."



Resources

Creating a Local Mental Health Resource Page

One of the most valuable steps LIUNA affiliates and signatory contractors can take for their workforce – both in the office and in the field – is to create a list of available mental health resources. This list can be shared online, posted at a Local Union hall or jobsite or shared in any other way it will reach members. Start with the following information:

LIUNA Health & Welfare Fund

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Website(s) with benefit information: _____

Telehealth phone number(s): _____

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Member Assistance Program (MAP)

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Peer Support

Name of peer supporter(s): _____

Contact phone number(s): _____

National Resources

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The 24-hour toll-free crisis hotline that puts callers in contact with their local crisis center for immediate assistance.

 Call **988**

 Text "MHA" to **741741**

Disaster Distress Helpline

This multilingual crisis support service is available 24/7 to all residents in the U.S. and its territories who are experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters.

 Call **800-985-5990**

Treatment and Referral Line

SAMHSA's 24/7 treatment and referral line provides referrals to alcohol, substance abuse and dual diagnosis treatment facilities. SAMHSA also offers an online Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator.

 Call **800-662-4357**

 Visit **findtreatment.gov**

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

The NAMI HelpLine is available Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. - 10 p.m. Eastern, for people struggling with their mental health.

 Call **800-950-6264**

 Email **helpline@nami.org**

 Text "friend" to **62640**

Local Resources

Include additional local resources that may be available in your area below:

Organization: _____ Organization: _____

Service provided: _____ Service provided: _____

Contact information: _____ Contact information: _____

Starting a Peer Support Group

Launching a peer support group is relatively straightforward but does require some planning and coordination. The steps and considerations below will help you get started.

1. Seek organizational support

- ▶ Explain peer support and its benefits to key decision makers.
- ▶ Gain approval and support from the Executive Board and other leadership.

2. Define purpose and scope

- ▶ Determine the group's objective. Will it be recovery focused or more educational?
- ▶ Will more than one group be formed initially or in the future to meet different needs?
- ▶ Decide who the group is intended for: members only, their families or both.
- ▶ Consider whether it makes sense to partner with another LIUNA Local or international union.
- ▶ Will trained specialists or other professionals be invited to meetings to discuss specific topics?

3. Choose a venue: Select a meeting location that is accessible but still able to be confidential. This could be at a union hall or elsewhere.

4. Consider logistics

- ▶ How often will the group meet and for how long?
- ▶ Will people be asked to sign in?
- ▶ Will food or refreshments be provided? Who will cover the cost of these items?
- ▶ Who will be responsible for setting up? Consider sharing some responsibilities (e.g., door greeter, making coffee) among group members.

5. Promote the group

- ▶ Use available print channels, including posters and flyers, to get the word out.
- ▶ Use digital channels, including email, surveys, text blasts, messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp) and social media, to reach potential participants.
- ▶ Let LIUNA affiliates in the area, such as training funds, organizing funds, LECET funds, health and welfare funds and regional health and safety funds, know about the group.

Choosing Support Group Leaders

A group leader or facilitator is tasked with opening and closing meetings, setting the tone for discussion and dealing with any problems that might arise during the meeting. An effective group leader should possess the following qualities:

- ▶ **Communication skills:** Good listening skills and the ability to connect with people.
- ▶ **Trustworthy:** Ability to maintain confidentiality and be perceived as trustworthy by group members.
- ▶ **Empathic:** Understanding and compassion are essential for fostering a supportive environment.
- ▶ **Personal experience:** Leaders with personal or shared experiences of recovery or loss can offer unique insights, credibility and connection to participants by sharing their own journeys.
- ▶ **Knowledgeable:** Leaders should be familiar with available resources and skilled at navigating these systems.

Peer support leaders are usually not clinically licensed, but it may be helpful to complete a training program such as the certification offered by Labor Assistance Professionals (LAP).

While not all peer support groups will focus on recovery from drugs or alcohol, if that is the focus of the group, it's recommended the support group leader be a person in long-term recovery (at least five years).

It's recommended that group leaders do not hold leadership positions in the union because the power dynamic might cause a member to feel they can't speak openly about sensitive issues.

Sample Plan Language

Section 8. Behavioral Care Benefits

Laborers' Escaping Adversity Now Program

The Program offers assistance to participants of the Plan in accessing resources for the treatment and management of alcohol dependence and substance use disorder and for recovery support. The Program also provides assistance to participants in accessing resources for the treatment and management of behavioral health concerns.

The Program provides participants with access to a Laborers' Peer Specialist. The Specialist will work with the Plan's Member Assistance Program (MAP) and its Behavioral Health plan to offer resources and education to our members and their families. The Laborers' Peer Specialist is a primary point of contact for members and their families in need of services and will be available to assist members and their families in locating treatment and behavioral health facilities. The Specialist will be available by phone 24/7 to provide this assistance. The Laborers' Peer Specialist will also assist in the education of laborers on jobsites regarding this Plan's substance use disorder and behavioral health benefits.

Sample Peer Specialist Job Description

The Laborers' Peer Specialist will be the primary point of contact for Laborers and their family members struggling with issues causing significant life stress. These issues can range from a substance use disorder involving alcohol or drugs, mental health related issues such as anxiety or depression and other behavioral health struggles related to finances, relationships and other potentially stressful circumstances.

The Specialist will work closely with appropriate Fund Office personnel and the Fund's behavioral health vendors. The Specialist will help facilitate access for the Funds' participants to programs for alcohol and substance dependency, and for behavioral and mental health needs. The Specialist will also work with the appropriate Fund Office personnel to expand access to programs in which Laborers and members of their families may receive treatment, counseling or education.

This position is not a counseling position. The Specialist will educate the Fund's participants on the addiction, recovery and behavioral health treatment resources offered by the Fund and by the local community. The specialist will play an integral role in supporting and assisting the Fund's participants in accessing those resources.

Position Duties and Responsibilities

- ▶ *Serve as a primary point of contact for members and family members in need of the Member Assistance Program (MAP) or other appropriate behavioral health related services due to a substance use disorder, mental health issue or other circumstances contributing to major life stress. This includes finding recovery and behavioral health beds and connecting participants with needed services in a timely manner.*
- ▶ *Educate laborers on jobsites before and after work hours, at apprentice training sessions and at union meetings and union halls on behavioral health-related issues and recovery-related services, including training to administer Narcan.*
- ▶ *Develop a network of volunteer peer specialists in each Local Union who can serve as points of contact for referrals from Locals and Union contractors regarding substance use disorder issues and behavioral health issues.*
- ▶ *Facilitate counseling for substance use disorder, behavioral health needs and family issues.*
- ▶ *Facilitate peer networking and support groups within Locals for Laborers.*
- ▶ *Assist Laborers and family members in accessing any needed after care for recovery-related and behavioral health issues, as well as following up to ensure participation and increase the likelihood of the participant remaining in counseling.*
- ▶ *Maintain a working knowledge of current trends and developments in the behavioral health field through continuing education seminars, reading material and appropriate training to support the connection of participants to services.*
- ▶ *Maintain a daily log of activities and documentation of assistance provided.*
- ▶ *Provide quarterly and annual reporting.*
- ▶ *Perform any other duties as necessary and appropriate.*
- ▶ *In no situation will a Specialist transport a Fund participant in her/his vehicle during the course of employment. When necessary, the Specialist may assist in arranging transportation to a treatment facility via family member, ambulance or other appropriate method of transportation.*

Position Qualifications

- ▶ *Practical experience in the appropriate field is desirable.*
- ▶ *Ongoing participation in continuing education such as the annual Labor Assistance Program (LAP) training or other appropriate programs.*
- ▶ *Successful completion of Certified Peer Specialist training after hire and obtaining a Community Health Worker certification within one year of hire.*
- ▶ *Must complete HIPAA Privacy and Security training to ensure the protection of participants' Protected Health Information (PHI).*
- ▶ *Completion of other training as determined necessary by the Fund.*
- ▶ *Must be able to attest to at least five years of sustained and uninterrupted recovery.*



Take the LEAN Pledge

The LHSFNA is committed to helping LIUNA members and their families overcome adversity and maintain well-being in their lives. To achieve that goal, the Fund is asking LIUNA Regions, District Councils, Local Unions, health and welfare funds and signatory employers to pledge their support and take action.

By signing below, you pledge to count yourself as a LEAN Ambassador in your Region and take the following actions:

- ☒ Seek out and advocate for programs that improve the well-being of LIUNA members and their families
- ☒ Learn about the mental health, well-being and other support services provided by applicable LIUNA health and welfare fund(s), then share this information with members
- ☒ Advocate for peer support programs in your Region and seek buy-in from other LIUNA leaders and signatory employers
- ☒ Make every effort to launch a LEAN program for the members you represent
- ☒ Assist in the return to work process following a LIUNA members' extended absence from work.

LIUNA Region or Affiliate:

Name: Title:

Signed,

.....

Additional LHSFNA Resources

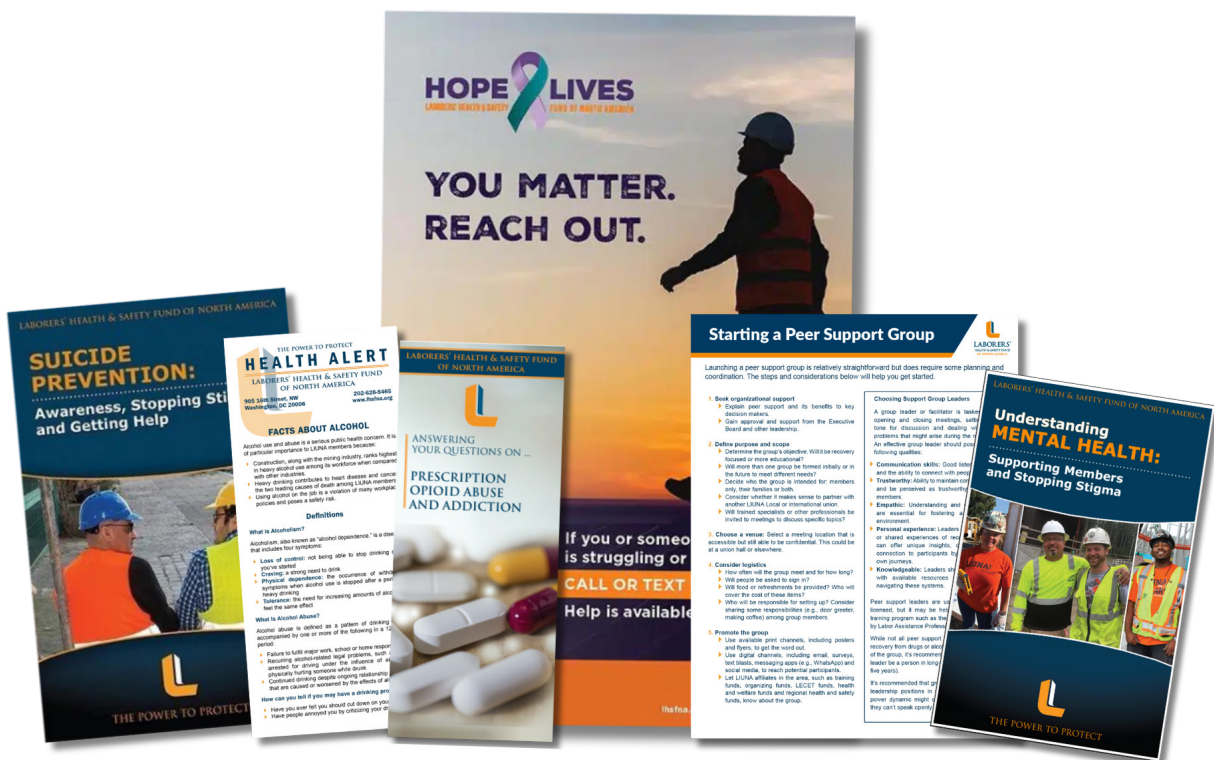


For additional information about LEAN LIUNA, join our mailing list by using this QR code.



You can also find out more about LEAN LIUNA on the LHSFNA's website at www.lhsfna.org/LEANLIUNA. This page includes:

- ▶ Contact information for each Region's LEAN LIUNA point person
- ▶ Contact information for existing LEAN programs
- ▶ Links to LHSFNA publications
- ▶ Articles related to LEAN LIUNA topics
- ▶ Downloadable PDFs of resources





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