

PREPARED, NOT REACTIVE



How Awake Window & Door Co. built a recovery-ready workplace

In less than a year, a Gilbert manufacturer went from “we’ll deal with it when it happens” to a Gold-badge, recovery-ready workplace. When two employees raised their hands and asked for help, Awake knew exactly what to do, and both are still on the team today.



FROM LEFT: ANDREW DARR, CRO · MARIA GATES, CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER · SCOTT GATES, CEO · JOHN ENGELSTAD, COO

2

employees got treatment through the new self-referral and return-to-work plan¹

4.77/5

average score on the 6-month employee stigma survey²

100%

say Awake would respond with support, not punishment²

10

supervisors trained to recognize, respond and refer³

“I honestly think that’s the reason why at least two of our employees are still here, because I knew exactly where to go. We already had a plan in place.”⁴

Joe Mason, Director of Training & Development, Awake Window & Door Co.

SNAPSHOT

COMPANY

Manufacturing · Gilbert, AZ
About 110 employees

PARTNER SINCE

September 2025

PROGRESS

15 of 25 Toolkit checklist items complete or in progress³

THE CHALLENGE

A TEAM WORTH PROTECTING



THE AWAKE WINDOW & DOOR CO. TEAM IN GILBERT, ARIZONA

Awake was built on second chances. Founded in 2020, the Gilbert manufacturer hires based on character, not background checks. About 60% of its team is justice-involved.⁴

In 2022, Awake lost a team member to overdose. Riqkee had just been promoted to lead the shipping department, which at the time moved about \$2 million a month (today it's closer to \$3 million). He was known across the shop for his laugh. He overdosed at home and didn't show up to work the next day.

"Just because somebody is smiling, just 'cause they're laughing and everything is going well, you do not know what's going on behind the scenes."⁴

Joe Mason, Awake Window & Door Co.

Awake already had a clear drug and alcohol policy, reviewed with every new hire, and its jobs are safety-sensitive: saws, cranes and forklifts. What it lacked was a plan for the moment someone asked for help. As Joe put it, the plan was "we'll deal with it at that point." He couldn't say where an employee on the company's health plan would go for treatment.

Awake joined the OUD Business Toolkit through Valley Leadership's Fair Chance Badge program, one of the first organizations to commit, to build that plan before the next crisis.

WHY IT MATTERS IN ARIZONA

4,929

non-fatal opioid overdoses in Arizona in 2025, up 22% from 2024⁵

80%

were people ages 25–64, the heart of the working-age population

\$58B

estimated cost of Arizona's fentanyl and opioid crisis in 2023⁶

Sources: AZDHS Opioid Overdose Dashboard; Common Sense Institute Arizona. See notes 5 and 6.

THE APPROACH

SMALL STEPS, LASTING CHANGE

No overhaul, no overwhelm. The OUD Business Toolkit team met with Awake's HR team more than 14 times, tackling policy, communication and benefits one achievable piece at a time.³

LEADERSHIP	Set the company's approach to substance use disorder (SUD), educated leaders on its prevalence and workplace impact, and reinforced healthy, safe behavior.
POLICY	Replaced the old drug and alcohol policy with a non-zero-tolerance Substance Use and Recovery Support Policy , approved by ownership and added to the handbook.
SAFETY-SENSITIVE DETAIL	Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) language, Medical Review Officer review of test results, fitness-for-duty evaluations, sobriety contracts and post-accident testing triggers.
COMMUNICATION	Taught employees how to self-refer; opened safe channels for questions (private HR email, anonymous box, one-on-ones); began ongoing education updates for the whole team.
SUPERVISORS	A 90-minute, in-person training on recognizing impairment, responding step by step, self-referral and return-to-work, complete with role-play. Delivered to 10 supervisors.
BENEFITS	Warn Me labels for insurance cards, a hands-on local EAP counselor, English and Spanish guides to treatment through the health plan, and an employee assistance fund financed through tax credits such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC).
MEASUREMENT	A bilingual stigma survey, rolled out at an all-hands meeting, to track how employees experience the culture.

THE RESULTS

A PLAN THAT WORKS WHEN IT MATTERS

The proof didn't take long. Within months, Awake's new system was helping real people, and its culture was changing with it.

01

EMPLOYEES ARE EDUCATED

It started at the first employee education meeting, where CEO Scott Gates told the whole company that no one would be fired for coming forward. Employees learned how to self-refer for treatment, and Toolkit resources keep the message visible across the shop.^{3,4}

02

SUPERVISORS ARE TRAINED

Ten supervisors completed hands-on training in recognizing impairment, responding step by step and guiding employees to self-referral and return-to-work, so the plan doesn't depend on HR alone.³

03

EMPLOYEES FEEL SAFE COMING FORWARD

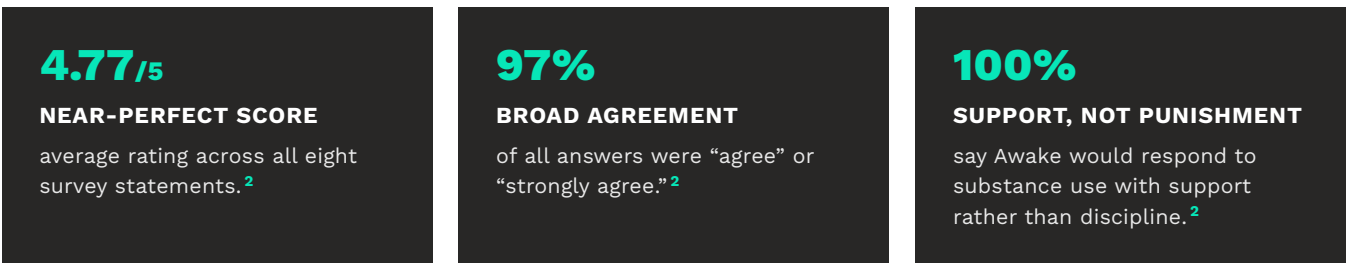
Two team members used the self-referral and return-to-work plan to get treatment, and leaders knew exactly where to send them. Now coworkers walk struggling colleagues to HR themselves.^{1,4}

EMPLOYEES SEE A SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE

In Awake’s 6-month stigma survey², 18 employees rated how their workplace responds to substance use. Every statement averaged 4.4 or higher out of 5, and half of respondents gave the top score on every question.



WHAT EMPLOYEES TOLD US

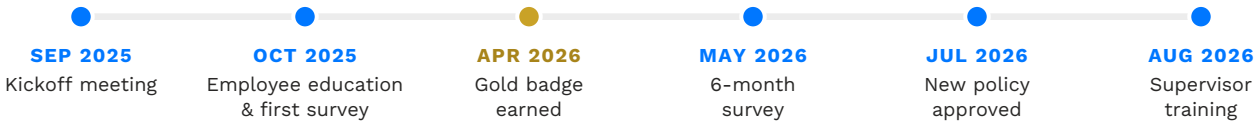


Survey scores: 1–5 scale, 18 responses, May 19 – June 5, 2026; statements paraphrased.

“That gave them the confidence and the trust, and they’ve tested us out on it. People have come forward. In fact, whenever we bring it up to the company in general, somebody usually comes up and they’re like, ‘Hey, I need to talk to you.’”⁴

Joe Mason, Awake Window & Door Co.

PROJECT TIMELINE³



“SOMETIMES YOU JUST DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW.”

Joe Mason shared Awake’s story on the National Safety Council webinar *Creating Safer Workplaces: Reducing Overdose Risk Through Recovery Supportive Practices*.⁴ Quotes are lightly edited for length and clarity.

ON THE POLICY REVIEW

“The opportunity to have a third party come in and review our policies and talk about it was tremendously helpful... They gave us feedback, which is just so valuable. It’s like gold.”

ON REWRITING THE RULES

“We’ve completely rewritten our whole substance use policy. It’s now our substance use and recovery support policy.”

ON HAVING A PLAN

“One of the first things that we did was finding a local facility that is 24 hours, so if somebody comes to us, we know exactly where to take them.”

ON CULTURE

“‘Don’t let HR find out’ was sort of more of the culture when we started... Since getting involved, it has been clear to everybody that substance use cannot be tolerated in the workplace, but you’re also not alone.”

ON PEERS STEPPING UP

“Our employees have now become the catalyst. They’ll come with them. They’re like, ‘Let’s go and talk to them.’”

ADVICE FOR EMPLOYERS

“Creating a space where people can talk to you, but then also a response process that is already planned out and proactive... that could be beneficial for any company.”

TAKEAWAYS

LESSONS ANY EMPLOYER CAN USE

1 BUILD THE PLAN BEFORE YOU NEED IT
Awake’s process was used within months of adoption.

2 KNOW EXACTLY WHERE TO SEND PEOPLE
Find a treatment option your health plan covers before anyone asks.

3 SAY IT FROM THE TOP
A CEO’s public promise gave employees the trust to come forward.

4 USE STORIES AND PEERS
People in recovery reach coworkers in a way HR can’t.

5 BREAK IT INTO SMALL STEPS
Short, regular sessions keep a busy HR team moving.

6 WRITE FOR SAFETY-SENSITIVE WORK
Clear MAT and fitness-for-duty language supports recovery and safety.

7 REACH EVERY EMPLOYEE
Spanish-language tools made the program work for the whole team.

8 WATCH THE HOLIDAYS
Struggles peak at year-end, so plan extra support for that season.

AWAKE ISN'T SLOWING DOWN

With leadership and policy work complete, Awake is turning to its whole workforce: rolling out the new policy to every employee, a company-wide education session on substance use and naloxone, naloxone on site, and resources employees can use to support family members. Its 12-month survey will show how far the culture has come.

“From day one, we wanted to be part of the solution in our community. Partnerships like the OUD Business Toolkit give our work, building quality windows and doors, a deeper purpose.”

Maria Gates, Chief People Officer, Awake Window & Door Co.



ON THE SHOP FLOOR AT AWAKE

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

THE OUD BUSINESS TOOLKIT

The Opioid Use Disorder Business Toolkit equips employers to lead with empathy and action. Built by Valley Leadership's Opioid Stigma Reduction Impact Team and supported by a multi-year grant from the Maricopa County Department of Public Health, it's free and includes workplace resources, an AI chatbot, and a guided implementation system. In its first year, 26 small, medium and large employers adopted it.⁷



**Gold-level Opioid Prevention
& Recovery Champion**

Earned April 2026

READY TO LEAD WITH EMPATHY AND ACTION?

The Toolkit is free for Arizona employers of every size. Contact Kate Kucharski, Director of Business Engagement & Wellbeing, at kate@valleyleadership.org.

oudbiztoolkit.org

SOURCES & NOTES

1. Outcomes reported by Awake Window & Door Co. to Valley Leadership, 2026. Employee treatment details are shared in aggregate to protect privacy.
2. Awake 6-month employee stigma survey, administered by Valley Leadership: 18 responses, May 19 – June 5, 2026, 1–5 agreement scale. Percentages are the share answering “agree” or “strongly agree.”
3. Valley Leadership OUD Business Toolkit program records for Awake, September 2025 – September 2026; checklist status as of September 28, 2026 (12 items complete, 3 in progress). Supervisor training delivered August 25, 2026.
4. Joe Mason, Director of Training and Development, Awake Window & Door Co., National Safety Council webinar *Creating Safer Workplaces: Reducing Overdose Risk Through Recovery Supportive Practices*, August 2026.
5. Arizona Department of Health Services, Opioid Overdose Dashboard, verified non-fatal opioid overdose events, 2024 and 2025, by county of residence. Data updated September 17, 2026; accessed September 24, 2026. azdhs.gov/opioid/dashboards
6. Common Sense Institute Arizona, 2023 cost estimate for the fentanyl and opioid crisis, incl. border security; reported by Cronkite News, June 24, 2024.
7. Valley Leadership, Opioid Stigma Reduction Impact Team program data, 2026.