

Working Toward a Drug-Free Workplace

Imagine the ways in which a drug-free workplace makes a difference for all involved.

OVER 75%

of those suffering from drug or alcohol addictions are employed.

Billions of US dollars are spent by organizations every year because of substance abuse. Accidents and workers' compensation claims can be costly, especially since less than 20% of employees seek help for their addictions.

Substance abusers are more likely to change jobs, arrive late, be absent, have lower productivity, and be involved in accidents. In small businesses with fewer than 25 employees, the odds are twice as high that an employee is using illegal drugs.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SIGNS

It's helpful to know the signs of drugs and alcohol use in the workplace. Aggression, paranoia, energy level extremes (too

much or too little), and slowed or slurred speech are all common indicators. In addition, a worker may smell like alcohol or marijuana, experience mysterious weight loss, or have unexplained absences and missed appointments.

EMPLOYER ASSESSMENT

Employers will want to consider: What laws or regulations is your organization / industry required to follow?

- What are the current substance abuse issues in the organization?
- Are employees that abuse substances responsible for confidential documents, tracking finances, or handling machinery or dangerous chemicals?
- How can you support employees who do not abuse drugs or alcohol, and extend assistance to those who do?

CREATING A DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

The US Department of Health and Human Services recommends implementing a four-part workplace program:

- **Training** - Encourage employees to adopt healthy behaviors in and outside the job. Offer additional wellness programs to maximize results.
- **Written policy** - Laws, regulations, and company goals should be in written format. Behavioral expectations and consequences should also be noted.
- **Drug testing** - Recreational drug use can often be deterred with workplace drug testing. Employees in need of

help can also be easily identified.

- **Employee Assistance Program** - Enrolling in an EAP helps address substance abuse and mental health issues. Prevention is always more cost-effective than waiting for problems to occur.

ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Assess** - Ask your supervisors how they're currently handling any drug use in the workplace.
- ✓ **Survey** - Consider a luncheon or meeting to ask employees for their input about a substance abuse program.
- ✓ **Implement** - Talk with other local businesses to see what community resources and programs are available. Consider purchasing an EAP to better equip your employees and supervisors.
- ✓ **Evaluate** - If you think an employee has a drug or alcohol program, refrain from accusations. Instead, discuss their workplace performance and behavior. Stay objective and fair, treating all employees equally.

KEEP IN MIND

A drug-free workplace is the most productive one. Higher morale and employee retention, along with the decreased cost of workers' compensation, are just a few of the benefits.

What steps will you take today to ensure your workplace is safe, effective, and drug-free?