

Drug-Free Workplace Program

Drug and alcohol abuse is among the nation's leading illnesses. It does not discriminate against race or economic groups. Dependency on drugs or alcohol often leads to occupational accidents, increased absenteeism, lost productivity, turnover, morale and disciplinary problems, a deterioration of family relations, and crime. These factors, along with the estimates that one out of every ten full-time employees uses drugs or abuses alcohol and that 76% of all illegal drug users are employed, indicate a need to combat substance abuse in the workplace.

Many large companies have realized that substance abuse affects their employees and profitability and have started drug-testing programs. However, smaller companies protest that the cost to implement a Drug-Free Workplace Program is too expensive and the task too difficult. Drug testing pays for itself through productivity gains and improvements in workers' compensation results. An effective Program includes the following:

1. A written substance-abuse policy
2. Education/Training
3. Drug & Alcohol Testing
4. Employee Assistance Program

Policy

The substance-abuse policy is the most important component of the program because it provides a written explanation to employees on:

1. Why the program has been adopted
 - Provide a safe and healthy workplace
 - Ensure quality products
 - Protect company resources and reputation
 - Comply with state or federal regulations
2. Who will be drug/alcohol tested
 - All Applicants/Employees
 - Employees in designated positions (i.e. safety, or security-sensitive, management)
 - Employees regulated by state or federal law to be tested

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3. Under what circumstances an applicant/employee will be tested
 - Post Job-Offer
 - Post-Accident
 - Reasonable Suspicion
 - Random
 - Follow-up to Rehabilitation
4. Consequences of testing positive, refusing to be tested, or selling drugs/ alcohol at work
 - Suspension with or without the opportunity to seek rehabilitation
 - Probation with or without the opportunity to seek rehabilitation
 - Termination/Not hiring applicant

Every employee should receive a copy of the company-substance abuse policy and sign a consent form to testing. Retain the form in the employee's personnel file. At least 30 days notice should be given to employees prior to adopting drug testing.

Education/Training

The more employees learn about the company's substance-abuse policy, the less likely they are to challenge the policy if they test positive for drugs or alcohol. Furthermore, supervisors need additional training in identifying substance abuse, documenting problems, and intervening so that help can be provided.

Drug & Alcohol Testing

There are four components to the testing process:

1. Specimen Collection
 - The specimen (urine for a drug test, breath/blood for alcohol testing) should be provided at a qualified collection site (i.e. medical clinic). The clinic should maintain proper chain of custody forms and procedures throughout the collection process to ensure that the specimen has not been altered. Furthermore, a photo identification card should be required to ensure that the requested applicant/ employee is providing the specimen.
2. Laboratory Analysis
 - Analysis should only be done at a SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Service Administration) certified laboratory. An initial screening, Enzyme Multiplied Immunoassay Technique (EMIT) should be done on the urine specimen. Any positive results from this screen should be confirmed through Gas Chromatography with Mass Spectrometry (GC/MS). This initial/ confirmation test combination has been upheld in court and is required for all federally-mandated programs and by many states.

3. Medical Review

- To ensure that the positive test result was not due to the proper use of a prescribed medication, employees testing positive should be interviewed by a Medical Review Officer. If the MRO determines that there was a legitimate medical reason for the presence of drugs, the MRO can overturn the test result and report it as a negative.

4. Confidential Results Reporting

- Strict confidentiality should be maintained regarding the results of drug or alcohol tests and any rehabilitation an employee may participate in. Information should be provided on a need-to-know basis only.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Offering rehabilitation and counseling services to an employee and/or family member can help retain a valued employee. A qualified EAP typically charges an annual fee based on the number of employees at a company. This covers a limited number of counseling sessions and a referral for additional treatment, when needed. Accident & Health Insurance often covers some of the employee's rehabilitation expenses.

Steps Involved To Implement A Drug-Free Workplace Program

1. Gain management commitment
2. Announce your program at least 30 days prior to implementing
3. Prepare your substance-abuse policy and have an attorney review it.
4. Locate a clinic for collection. Contract with a Laboratory and Medical Review Officer
5. Distribute your policy to all employees/ supervisors and host a training session.
6. Have each employee sign the consent form
7. Administer your program as described in your policy - practicing strict confidentiality

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