



Webinar 13 - July 10, 2024

# Substance Abuse Awareness in the Workplace

## WEBINAR OUTLINE

### INTRO/SETTING THE STAGE

- Substance Abuse Awareness in the Workplace

### POTENTIAL INDICATORS OF EMPLOYEE SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

### WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

### CONFRONTING AND MANAGING AN EMPLOYEE ABUSING SUBSTANCES

### HRtelligence TIPS

### INTRO/SETTING THE STAGE

#### Substance Abuse Awareness in the Workplace

- Substance abuse in the workplace is more prevalent than most employers realize
- Substance abuse permeates every aspect of life for those suffering from addiction, and addictive behaviors don't get put on hold during a 9-5 job
- 23% of employees have admitted to using drugs or alcohol during work hours
- Over 1 in 5 respondents say that they have used [marijuana](#) recreationally in their place of work during work hours. In fact, nearly 5% of people admit to using marijuana recreationally on a daily basis and over 13% of people say that they use marijuana at work more than once a month.
- 66% of people admit that they have once used [alcohol](#) during work hours. Marijuana was the second most common substance to be used during work hours
- Over 10% of people admit to using [Oxycontin](#) or [Vicodin](#) outside of medical need at work.
- [Codeine](#), [Adderall](#), and [Ritalin](#) all had similar rates of use in the workplace, hovering at a little over 8%.

Source: <https://drugabuse.com/addiction/substance-abuse-workplace/>

### POTENTIAL INDICATORS OF EMPLOYEE SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

Supervisors and managers should be trained to spot warning signs such as these:

- Decreased Performance and Productivity - 57% of employees who abuse drugs or alcohol lose upwards of ten hours of productivity each work week.
- Absenteeism, particularly absences without notification, or excessive use of sick days.
- Frequent disappearances from the worksite; long, unexplained absences; improbable excuses.
- Unreliability in keeping appointments and meeting deadlines.

- Work performance that alternates between periods of high and low productivity.
- Increase in accidents on and off the job.
- Mistakes attributable to inattention, poor judgment or bad decisions.
- Confusion or difficulty concentrating or recalling details and instructions.
- Increases in the effort and time required for ordinary tasks.
- Problems with interpersonal relations with co-workers.
- Shirking of responsibility for errors or oversights.
- Progressive deterioration in personal appearance and hygiene.
- Increasing personal and professional isolation.
- Signs of morning-after hangovers.
- Physical signs such as exhaustion, hyperactivity, dilated pupils, slurred speech or an unsteady walk.

Source:

<https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/toolkits/employing-managing-people-substance-use-addictions#:~:text=Employers%20must%20be%20cautious%20when,to%20a%20legitimate%20health%20reason>

## **WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION**

Preparation extends beyond simply informing employees about a drug-free workplace policy or program. The employer, human resources staff, supervisors, and employees all have a role.

Successful preparation includes:

- Ensuring that everyone in the workplace understands that a drug-free workplace is more likely to be a safe, healthy, and productive workplace.
- Developing a process to continually review and update the drug-free workplace policy and the strategies and programs that support a drug-free workplace, health, and wellness.
- Informing and motivating your employees to support the policy and the available strategies and programs that support a drug-free workplace, health, and wellness.
- Creating a shared sense of responsibility for the success of a drug-free workplace policy and the strategies and programs that support a drug-free workplace, health, and wellness.

### **Focus on Prevention**

Workplace alcohol and drug policies are essential to workplace safety. Employers should establish clear guidelines as to what their expectations are and the consequences for violating those policies.

In addition to the value of meeting legal requirements and reducing liability risks, good workplace policies can help employers reduce unplanned absenteeism, excessive health care costs, turnover and reduced productivity associated with substance use in the workforce.

## Components of a Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace

Most successful drug-free workplace programs have five key components:

- **A written policy** forms the foundation of your drug-free workplace program. At minimum, your policy should include the rationale for the policy, such as organizational goals and compliance with laws or regulations; expectations for compliance, including who, what, when, and where; assistance options to support employees in following the policy; and consequences for violating the policy.
- **Employee Education** for employees at all levels to be prepared for the implementation of the drug-free workplace policy and program. Everyone in the organization needs information about the problems associated with substance misuse. Be sure to provide education and training that reinforces healthy attitudes and behaviors and deepens awareness on how substance misuse can affect employee health and employment.
- **Supervisor Training** can help maximize the effectiveness of your drug-free workplace policy and program. Supervisors should be well-informed about the policy and program and be aware of legally sensitive areas. They must also be trained on how to document potential problems in a fair and systematic manner, honor confidentiality, and refer employees to appropriate services. Supervisors may also need training on how to help employees reintegrate into the workplace after receiving services.
- **Drug Testing** is one way to protect your workplace from the negative effects of substance misuse. Conducting drug testing may help your organization comply with federal regulations or insurance carrier requirements. It can improve workplace safety and reduce costs from misuse of alcohol and other drugs in the workplace. A drug-testing program can also deter employees from coming to work unfit for duty.

### Employee Assistance Programs

Source: <https://www.samhsa.gov/workplace/employer-resources>

## Workplace Policies

Companies should establish clear policies around substance use. Workplace drug policies should be clear about the use, possession or sale of drugs on company premises, and control the consumption of alcohol and other drugs during work hours.

Employers should focus on four key policy areas when working to prevent substance misuse in the workplace:

- Providing employee education focusing on substance use, opioids, opioid misuse and overdose
- Supporting a workplace culture that values holistic employer health and well-being
- Ensuring that benefits and health care plan coverage includes preventative services, as well as treatment for SUD and OUD
- Developing a robust, clear Drug-Free Workplace Program

## Drug-Free Workplace Programs

Drug-Free Workplace Programs protect both employers and employees from harm. These programs should include prevention, detection and treatment components that align with the organization's chosen policy. The program should include the following elements:

- Clear, precise written policies and procedures that define employee and employer responsibilities
- Education and resources for employees and supervisors
- Drug testing guidelines
- Effective employee benefits such as health care coverage, employee assistance programs and flexible sick time/PTO
- Mechanisms for directing employees into treatment and re-integrating employees in recovery

## Employee Assistance Programs and Worker Peer Support Programs

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are important, supportive tools to make available to all workers, especially workers who might be struggling with substance use issues.

Most EAPs provide 24 hour/7 day hotline counseling services, either in person, by phone or computer.

All EAPs should guarantee confidentiality, assuring workers of secure and private assistance that helps address their work-related and personal issues. Selecting a high-quality EAP is critical to supporting workers with substance use disorders.

Worker Peer Support Programs have also been particularly helpful in addressing these issues. In these programs, workers who have experienced substance use or mental health challenges and learned to manage them are formally trained to help co-workers who are facing similar issues. Peers let their co-workers know they are not alone in dealing with substance use and mental health problems and encourage them to take advantage of counseling, either through an EAP or otherwise.

## **CONFRONTING AND MANAGING AN EMPLOYEE ABUSING SUBSTANCES**

- Employers must be cautious when confronting an employee about suspected drug or alcohol use or misuse. There may be legitimate reasons for the symptoms, such as bloodshot eyes due to allergies or absenteeism due to a legitimate health reason.
- Absent drug testing, performance discussions may be one of the best vehicles for broaching suspected substance use. Addressing performance or conduct concerns directly can open the door for more candid discussions.
- Employers may inform an employee that they have noticed particular behaviors and ask for an explanation, for example, "It appears that you are very distracted lately, and your performance is suffering. You missed last week's deadline, and your co-workers are reporting that your speech is slurred and your eyes bloodshot. Is there something going on that we can help with?"
- An employer's response to confirmed substance misuse should generally consider the company's overall experience with the employee, the impact of the substance use on the company and the workplace, and how others have been treated in similar circumstances.
- Employers may also choose a no-tolerance policy and take disciplinary action—up to and including termination—based on job performance problems that may be the result of an employee's alcohol or drug use. However, it is critical to document such problems and any actions taken. An employer has no obligation to excuse drug or alcohol use on the job or a violation of a drug-free workplace policy.
- Some employers may offer help to employees—perhaps time off to seek treatment and a return-to-work agreement—in lieu of termination. Time off to seek treatment for addiction may be covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act or state law. Of course, whether to accept help is the employee's decision.

Source:

<https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/toolkits/employing-managing-people-substance-use-addictions#:~:text=Employers%20must%20be%20cautious%20when,to%20a%20legitimate%20health%20reason>

What should you do if the substance abuse happens outside of work hours?

As an HR professional, you should act only when an employee is impaired at work.

Remain focused on whether an employee is impaired during work hours. If an employee drinks alcohol, takes prescription or illicit drugs or is legally using recreational or medical marijuana outside of work hours, workplace substance abuse policies are not enforceable.



TRENDS



INSIGHTS



PRACTICAL  
GUIDANCE



STRATEGIES

- Employers should be aware of the warning signs of workplace substance abuse, which may include decreased performance and productivity, absenteeism and tardiness, and changes in appearance, speech, and mood.
- Substance abuse prevention and treatment starts with building a culture of health, educating employees, and offering wellness and cessation programs.
- Creating a positive, communicative, and supportive work environment is crucial for helping employees battling substance addiction.
- Implement a alcohol and drug-free workplace policy.
- The employer is key to the success of a drug-free workplace policy, as well as the strategies and programs that support that policy. An effective policy is buoyed by a positive workplace culture, which is sustained by employers espousing the policy.
- Workplace leaders must show support and set the right tone for your drug-free workplace efforts.