



Workplace Drug and Alcohol Policy

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One way to keep workers safe is through a comprehensive Workplace Alcohol and Drug Policy.

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Why Have A Policy?

The goal of a workplace drug and alcohol policy is to maintain a work environment that is free from the adverse effects of drugs and alcohol. It's an important issue because substance abuse can be a tremendous drain on a company's fiscal well-being. This takes many forms, including decreased productivity, increased absences, rising numbers of accidents, more use of sick leave and increases in workers' compensation claims. Every employer should be committed to programs that promote employee safety, health and well-being as well as successful job performance. In support of that commitment, a drug and alcohol policy should be established and enforced.

Impact of Substance Abuse

There are a variety of warning signs that employers should look for if they suspect a substance abuse problem:

- Increased absenteeism and tardiness
- Deteriorating work performance, including significant decreases in work quality and/or productivity
- High rates of mishaps, both on and off the job
- Unusually high medical claims
- Excessive mood swings, which may manifest themselves in immoderate levels of talking, anxiety or moodiness
- Overreactions to criticism, both real or imagined
- Avoidance of supervisors
- Deterioration in physical appearance or grooming
- Financial problems

Implementing the Policy

There are a variety of ways to implement a policy of this nature, including methods specific to applicants vs. employees.

Applicants under Final Consideration for Employment

- All applicants offered employment should be screened for controlled substances and alcohol as part of the final pre-employment process. Test results should be reviewed prior to employment and any offer of employment should be conditioned on the candidate passing a drug and alcohol test.
- Prior to the screen, applicants must sign a consent form authorizing the company-designated laboratory to perform the drug-and-alcohol screening test and release the results of that test to the company.
- Employers reserve the right to determine the definition of "successfully pass."
- Test results should be treated as confidential and only be communicated to the applicant by the company's designated representative.

Prohibitions for All Employees

The following should be expressly prohibited while on company business or on company premises*:

The use, possession, transportation, solicitation, promotion, sale or transfer of controlled substances as defined by law, except for individual use of prescribed medication.

* Company premises includes, but is not limited to, all property, buildings, structures, customer job sites, parking lots and means of transportation owned, leased or rented by the company.

Enforcing the Policy

There are several ways to enforce a workplace alcohol and drug policy. The following are suggested elements that will help ensure thorough enforcement.

Employee Acknowledgment

Each employee should be required to provide written acknowledgement of the workplace alcohol and drug policy prior to hire or, for existing employees, upon implementation of the policy. These signed documents should be made a part of the employee's personnel file.

Right to Search

As part of the policy, an employer should explicitly state they reserve the right to search for controlled substances and alcohol on company premises, including the search of personal possessions of employees, where reasonable cause to believe or suspicion exists that drugs and/or alcohol are on company premises.

Employee Drug and Alcohol Tests

- Employees should, at the request of their employer, be tested when there is reasonable cause to believe the employee is using illegal or unprescribed controlled substances, or is substantially impaired by alcohol, illegal or unprescribed controlled substances.
- Any employee who sustains an on-the-job injury or who is involved in an on-the-job accident should be screened for controlled substances and alcohol on the day of the injury or accident at the employer's discretion. Should the injury or accident be so severe that the screening cannot be done on the day of the injury or accident, then a screening will be done as soon as possible and before the employee can return to work.

Failure to Comply

- Failure to comply with any provisions of an established drug and alcohol policy should result in discipline, up to and including termination.
- Employees who are required to submit to a drug and alcohol testing must be asked to sign a consent form. Failure to sign the consent form constitutes noncompliance with the policy. Employees initiating a delay in testing are also in noncompliance with the policy.
- If the test of an employee is confirmed positive, the company may offer the employee one or more of the following alternatives:
 - Participate in and successfully complete a certified treatment program approved by the company (note that participation in a treatment program does not mean the past performance problems will be removed from an employee's records)
 - Resignation
 - Termination



Want to know more?

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- Safety-training modules accessible 24/7 for policyholders' employees
- Loss-control booklets and other printed materials available to print and order from our website
- Low-cost safety-training videos from our online library

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- As a condition of continuing employment, any employee who is enrolled in a controlled substance treatment program will be required to grant the company the right to conduct follow-up tests with or without cause and without prior notice at any time during the subsequent 12-month period. Should any of the follow-up test results be confirmed positive, the employee will not be eligible to participate in another company-coordinated treatment program and should be given the following options:
 - Resignation
 - Termination

Voluntary Referral

As part of a workplace alcohol and drug policy, employers have the option of implementing a voluntary referral option. With this, any employee who has a drug and/or alcohol problem may request a referral for treatment.

- These requests should be made through the employee's supervisor or the Human Resources department.
- Employees who voluntarily enter a treatment program must successfully complete the treatment program or be terminated.
- Any employee who successfully completes a treatment program may be discharged just like any other employee if, at any time, the employee is diagnosed and confirmed positive on a drug screening or in any other way fails to comply with the company's drug and alcohol policy.

