

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE FOR EMPLOYEES

The Drug-Free Workplace Policy accomplishes two major things:

- It sends a clear message that the use of alcohol and drugs in the workplace is prohibited; and
- It encourages employees who have problems with alcohol and other drugs to voluntarily seek help.

Let's talk about the impact of substance abuse in the workplace:

Employee Health: People who abuse alcohol or other drugs tend to neglect nutrition, sleep, and other basic health needs. Substance abuse depresses the immune system. Its impact on the workplace includes higher use of health benefits; increased use of sick time and higher absenteeism and tardiness.

Productivity: Employees who are substance abusers can be physically and mentally impaired while on the job. Substance abuse interferes with job satisfaction and the motivation to do a good job. Its impact on the workplace includes reduced output; increased errors; lower quality of work and reduced customer satisfaction.

Decision Making: Individuals who abuse alcohol and/or other drugs often make poor decisions and have a distorted perception of their ability. Here, substance abuse's impact on the workplace includes reduced innovation; reduced creativity; less competitiveness; and poor decisions, both daily and strategic.

Safety: Common effects of substance abuse include impaired vision, hearing, and muscle coordination and low levels of attention, alertness, and mental acuity. Its impact on the workplace includes increased accidents; and more workers' compensation claims.

Employee Morale: The presence of an employee with drug and/or alcohol problems creates a strain on relationships between coworkers. Organizations that appear to condone substance abuse create the impression that they don't care. Impact on the workplace includes higher turnover; lower quality; and reduced team effort.

Security: Employees with drug and/or alcohol problems often have financial difficulties, and employees who use illegal drugs may be engaging in illegal activities in the workplace. In this area, substance abuse's impact on the workplace can include theft and law enforcement involvement.

Families and coworkers can have a significant impact on substance use and abuse. One way is through "enabling" – an action that someone takes to protect the person with the problem from the consequences of his or her actions. Unfortunately, enabling actually helps the person to NOT deal with his or her problem.

Examples of enabling include:

Covering Up: Providing alibis, making excuses, or even doing an impaired worker's work rather than confronting the issue that he/she is not meeting his/her expectations.

Rationalizing: Developing reasons why the person's continued substance abuse or behavior is understandable or acceptable.

Blaming: Blaming yourself for the person's continued substance abuse or getting angry at the individual for not trying hard enough to control his/her use or to get help.

Controlling: Trying to take responsibility for the person by throwing out his/her drugs, cutting off the supply, or trying to minimize the impact by moving him/her to a less important job

Threatening: Saying that you will take action (ceasing to cover up, taking formal disciplinary action) if the employee doesn't control his/her use, but not following through.



When it comes to assistance, there are several important things to remember:

- First, difficulty performing on the job can sometimes be caused by unrecognized personal problems – including addiction to alcohol and other drugs
- Help is available
- Although a supervisor may suspect that an employee's performance is poor because of underlying personal problems, it is up to the employee to decide whether or not that is the case.

It is an employee's responsibility to decide whether or not to seek help. Addiction is treatable and reversible and an employee's decision to seek help is a private one and will not be made public.