

Employee Drug-Free Workplace Education

Working Partners for an
Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace



Provided by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy
U.S. Department of Labor

Objectives of Training

Employees should be familiar with the Drug-Free Workplace Policy and aware of the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse. Employees should understand:

- The requirements of the policy
- The prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse and its impact on the workplace
- How to recognize the link between poor performance and alcohol and/or drug abuse
- The progression of the disease of addiction
- What types of assistance may be available

Overview of Drug-Free Workplace Policy

The Drug-Free Workplace Policy accomplishes two major things:

- Sends a clear message that alcohol and drug use in the workplace is prohibited
- Encourages employees who have problems with alcohol and other drugs to voluntarily seek help

The Drug-Free Workplace Policy exists to:

- Protect the health and safety of all employees, customers and the public
- Safeguard employer assets from theft and destruction
- Maintain product quality and company integrity and reputation
- Comply with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 or any other applicable laws

The Drug-Free Workplace Policy answers the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the policy and program?
 - The purpose is to provide a safe environment for its employees, students and members of the public.
- Who is covered by the policy?
 - All employees
- When does the policy apply?
 - Duration of your employment

- What behavior is prohibited?
 - Possessing, using, selling, distributing, or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and from possessing, using, selling or distributing drug paraphernalia, while on College property or while involved in student activities.
- Are employees required to notify supervisors of drug-related convictions?
 - Any felony convictions are to be reported at time of hire

- Does the program include drug testing?
 - Employees in safety-sensitive positions are required to submit to drug and alcohol testing after an offer of employment is made and prior to final selection for appointment, additionally they will be required to test on an annual basis and participate in the random drug/alcohol screening.
 - The College will require any employee to undergo drug and/or alcohol testing if the College has a reasonable suspicion that an employee has committed drug and/or alcohol abuse affecting the work place.

- What are the consequences for violating the policy?
 - Suspension or dismissal
- Are there Return-to-Work Agreements?
 - Case-by-case basis
- What type of assistance is available to employees needing help?
 - Community hotlines;
 - Self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon, etc.;
 - Community mental health centers;
 - Private therapists or counselors; and
 - Addiction treatment centers.

- How is employee confidentiality protected?
 - Tests will only be reported to the personnel specialist
 - Personnel specialist will notify employee verbally and/or in writing of test results
 - Lab will retain records for a minimum of two years
 - Personnel specialist will make the employee's supervisor and department head aware of the test results
 - No lab reports or test results will appear in the employee's personnel file unless they are part of a disciplinary action, but will be placed in a special locked file maintained by the personnel specialist
- Who is responsible for enforcing the policy?; and
 - Personnel Specialist
- How is the policy communicated to employees?
 - Section 8.3 of the Personnel Handbook

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. It's 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.

- Organizational image and community relations
 - Accidents, lawsuits and other incidents stemming from employee substance abuse problems may receive media attention and hurt an organization's reputation in the community. The impact on the workplace includes reduced trust and confidence; and reduced ability to attract high-quality employees.

Ways People Use Alcohol and Other Drugs

• Experimentation

- Out of curiosity and/or at the urging of peers, individuals may try drinking or using drugs illegally. If the illegal drug use is not repeated, or discontinues after a short time, such experimentation may not be problematic. Likewise, deciding to drink alcoholic beverages after early experimentation is not problematic for most adults.

• Social/Recreational

- Drinking alcoholic beverages is permitted in American society, and some excessive use may even be condoned. If use doesn't cause problems for the user, or those around him/her, most people would consider such use to be social or recreational. Some use marijuana in a similar manner – only in certain social or recreational situations and without immediate adverse consequences. However, marijuana use is illegal, except in a few states.

• As a stress reliever

- Many people use alcohol or other drugs to help them cope with pressure or stress. If this type of use is infrequent and doesn't create more stress or difficulties for the user, or those around him/her, it may not lead to addiction, but alcoholism and drug addiction often begin with relief drinking.

Abuse: Using a substance to modify or control mood or state of mind in a manner that is illegal or harmful to oneself or others. Potential consequences of abuse include:

- Accidents or injuries
- Blackouts
- Legal problems
- Poor job performance
- Family problems
- Sexual behavior that increases the risk of HIV infection

Addiction:

A number of individuals occasionally use or abuse alcohol or drugs without becoming addicted, but for many, abuse continues despite repeated attempts to return to more social or controlled use and leads to addiction. Addiction is the irresistible compulsion to use alcohol and drugs despite adverse consequences. It is characterized by repeated failures to control use, increased tolerance and increased disruption in the family.

Understanding Addiction

Unfortunately, it is not possible to tell early on whose use may lead to abuse and/or addiction. For one in ten people, abuse leads to addiction.

Addiction to alcohol and other drugs is:

Chronic – Once you have developed an addiction, you will always have to deal with it. You may manage to stop using alcohol or other drugs for significant periods of time, but for most, the disease doesn't disappear but rather goes into remission. Should you attempt to resume 'normal' use, you will rapidly return to addictive, out of control use and abuse.

Progressive – Addiction gets worse over time. With some drugs, the decline is rapid; with others, like alcohol, it can be more gradual, but it does get worse. Alcohol and other drugs cause a biochemical change in the nervous system that can persist even after the substance leaves the blood. Repeated use causes progressive damage.

Primary – Addiction is not just a symptom of some underlying psychological problem, a developmental stage or a reaction to stress. Once your use of alcohol or drugs has become an addiction, the addiction itself needs to be medically treated as a primary illness.

Terminal – Addiction to alcohol and/or other drugs often leads to disease and possibly death.

Characterized by Denial – One of the most disturbing and confusing aspects of addiction is that it is characterized by denial. The user denies that his/her use is out of control or that it is causing any problems at home or work. The user often seems to be the last to know that his/her life is out of control. There are effective strategies employed by professionals for helping to break through this denial, which must be overcome before treatment can take place.

- ***It's important to know that addiction is a family disease:***
 - Some people with a history of substance abuse in their family are more susceptible to developing problems with addiction. Children of alcoholics or addicts are three times as likely to develop problems. If both parents are addicts or alcoholics, the risk increases to five times as great. This is due to heredity as well as learned behavior. It is important for parents to realize that children learn much more from watching their behavior than listening to their advice.
- ***Prior abuse of alcohol and other drugs has a great impact on developing future problems:***
 - A pattern of abuse develops and can lead to addiction and psychological reliance on drugs and/or alcohol. This can be a slow progression for some and a rapid decline for others. Research demonstrates that the later in life an individual first drinks alcohol or uses other drugs, the less likely he or she will be to progress to problem use.

Other contributing factors:

Some people abuse alcohol and drugs as part of a self-destructive lifestyle. Other people start to use substances to seek relief from depression or crisis in their lives. Although some fortunate individuals never develop serious problems and use diminishes or ceases once the precipitating events change, others develop a serious problem before they even realize it.

Signs and Symptoms of Substance Abuse

Abuse of alcohol and other drugs affects people:

- Emotionally
- Behaviorally
- Physically

Emotional effects of substance abuse:

- Aggression
- Burnout
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Paranoia
- Denial

Behavioral effects of substance abuse:

- Slow reaction time
- Impaired coordination
- Slowed or slurred speech
- Irritability
- Excessive talking
- Inability to sit still
- Limited attention span
- Poor motivation or lack of energy

Physical effects of substance abuse:

- Weight loss
- Sweating
- Chills
- Smell of alcohol

Family and Coworker Impact

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:

- **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.
- **Withdrawing/Avoiding** – Avoiding contact with the person with the problem.

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; and

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.

Examples of traps family members and coworkers may fall into:

- **Sympathy** – Trying to get you involved in his/her personal problems.
- **Excuses** – Having increasingly improbable explanations for everything that happens.
- **Apology** – Being very sorry and promising to change. (“It won’t happen again.”)
- **Diversions** – Trying to get you to talk about other issues in life or in the workplace.

Innocence – Claiming he/she is not the cause of the problems you observe, but rather the victim. (“It isn’t true.” “I didn’t know.” “Everyone is against me.”)

Anger – Showing physically intimidating behavior, and blaming others. (“It’s your fault.”)

Pity – Using emotional blackmail to elicit your sympathy and guilt. (“You know what I’m going through. How can you do this to me now?”); and

Tears – Falling apart and expressing remorse upon confrontation.

Assistance

- **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

Help may be available from:

- Community hotlines
- Self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon, etc.
- Community mental health centers
- Private therapists or counselors
- Addiction treatment centers

Confidentiality

- Problems will not be made public
- Conversations with a referral agent - are private and will be protected
- All information related to performance issues will be maintained in his/her personnel file
- Information about referral to treatment, however, will be kept separately

- Information about treatment for addiction or mental illness is not a matter of public record and cannot be shared without a signed release from the employee
- If an employee chooses to tell coworkers about his/her private concerns, that is his/her decision
- Finally, when an employee tells his/her supervisor something in confidence, supervisors are obligated to protect that disclosure

However, there are some limits on confidentiality that may require:

- Disclosure of child abuse, elder abuse and serious threats of homicide or suicide as dictated by state law
- Reporting the results of assessment and evaluation following a positive drug test
- Verifying medical information to authorize release time or satisfy fitness-for-duty concerns as specified in our policy
- Revealing medical information to the insurance company in order to qualify for coverage under a benefits plan

Specific Drugs of Abuse

All drugs, including alcohol, chemically alter the mind and body. As a result, use of drugs and/or alcohol can impair motor skills, hinder judgment, distort perception, decrease reaction time and interfere with other skills necessary to do a job safely and efficiently. Specific drugs of abuse include those listed on the next slide, and all have their own set of signs and symptoms.

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Inhalants
- Cocaine
- Stimulants
- Depressants
- Hallucinogens
- Narcotics
- Designer Drugs

(If you would like more information on the signs and symptoms of any of these specifically, please contact Personnel and we will provide you with a brochure.)

- **To conclude**, we hope this presentation has shed some light on the impact of drug and alcohol abuse on the workplace, the value of drug-free workplace programs, and where employees struggling with substance problems can turn for help.
- Remember, additional information on drug-free workplaces is available on the U.S. Department of Labor's Working Partners for an Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace program Web site.
www.dol.gov/workingpartners