

Drug Use Awareness – For Managers/Supervisors

Addressing Employee Substance Abuse

Recognizing an employee's drug use isn't always easy. When one of your employees has a problem with alcohol or drugs, it can impact the whole work group. Problems can appear in areas such as meeting deadlines, team communication and morale, accidents, absenteeism and more.

The adverse economic impact of employee drug use on employers is well documented. So it's important to learn not only your organization's policies on substance abuse, but how to be aware of the signs of drug and alcohol use in your employees. Drawing upon available expert support can help you be better equipped to deal with such challenges.

Remember that you can always get prompt assistance in dealing with employee performance issues. Your program is in place to provide you with responsive professional support for your specific workplace challenges.

Warning Signs of Drug Use

As a manager, it always pays to be observant. And while you want to recognize good performance, it's also important to be on the lookout for possible negative trends. When an employee is having a problem with drugs, you're likely to see the following types of behavior changes:

- Abrupt declines in attendance, quality and output of work
- General attitude changes and/or irritability
- Withdrawal from responsibility
- Decline in physical appearance and grooming
- Difficulty with concentration and/or memory
- Impaired performance on the job—such as errors in judgment—affecting the quality of work or endangering safety
- Wearing of sunglasses at inappropriate times to hide dilated or constricted pupils
- A change in the employee's social group, and possibly an association with known substance abusers
- Unusual borrowing of money from friends and coworkers
- Requests for leave around payday
- Theft of small items from the workplace
- Excessive breaks during the workday

When changes in employee behavior begin to affect performance, it's time to intervene.

Workplace Impact of Drug Use – How to Respond

The statistics on the impact of drug use on the American workplace can be startling. Studies show that business owners in the U.S. lose an estimated \$100 billion per year because of substance abuse. More than sixty percent of adults know people who have gone to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol. These and many other such statistics indicate the prevalence of the problem.

Impact on Coworkers

A drug problem doesn't just hurt the employee. Often coworkers are asked to pick up the slack when an impaired colleague is absent. Coworkers may end up taking on extra assignments and working longer hours. This can lead to long-term resentments and increased stress at work. Also, the safety of coworkers can be put at risk if a drug user is under the influence at work.

How Should a Manager Respond?

If you spot the warning signs of substance use in an employee, there are several steps to take. First, document the behaviors and actions that may indicate trouble. There are checklists available to help you name specific behaviors and actions. Write down your specific observations about the employee's performance. Confirm these observations with another supervisor if possible.

Then it's time to confront the employee about what you have observed. In a "constructive confrontation," calmly and firmly address the performance issues with the employee *without* getting into personal problems or acting judgmental. Before your meeting, it may help to call and consult with an experienced counselor (24/7) to help you prepare.

Finally, offer support. Refer to your employee assistance program (EAP) and how it can help. Emphasize the confidentiality of the program and how EAP usage will not block someone's career path.

Remember that additional management resources—visit www.FOH4You.com.

Types of drugs used by first-time drug users

Marijuana – 67.5%

Pain relievers – 14.0%

Inhalants – 7.5%

Tranquilizers – 4.2%

Hallucinogens – 2.8%

Stimulants – 2.6%

Sedatives – 1.2%

Cocaine – 0.2%

Heroin – 0.1%

N = 3.1 million in 2011. Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

