



Drugs at Work

When a co-worker seems to be abusing drugs or alcohol, ignoring or avoiding the issue will not help the situation.

Diagnosis of an alcohol or other drug problem is not the job of a supervisor or colleague. However, being alert to changes in an employee's performance is a core component of everyone's job.

Some symptoms are common among alcohol and drug abusers but not always indicative of a problem. These include:

Performance

- inconsistent work quality
- poor concentration
- lowered productivity
- increased absenteeism
- careless mistakes
- errors in judgment
- needless risk taking
- disregard for safety
- unexplained disappearances from the job site
- extended lunch periods and early departures

Behavior

- frequent financial problems
- avoidance of friends and colleagues
- complaints about problems at home
- deterioration in personal appearance or health
- blaming others for problems and shortcomings
- complaints and excuses of vaguely defined illnesses

Implement a Drug-Free Policy

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) outlines five components necessary for an effective drug-free workplace:

- Create and implement a drug-free workplace policy
- Supervisor training
- Employee education and awareness
- Employee assistance program
- Drug testing, as appropriate

Workplace Substance Abuse

10 to 20% of the nation's workers who die on the job test positive for alcohol or other drugs, according to OSHA. Industries with the highest rates of drug use are the same as those at a high risk for occupational injuries, such as construction, mining, manufacturing and wholesale.

Comprehensive drug-free workforce programs are recommended within workplace environments involving safety-sensitive duties like operating machinery. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers information and guidance for employers on workplace drug-testing issues. Access the info at www.drugfreeworkplace.gov.

Safety tips developed based on generally accepted safety standards believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes.

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