



# Why You Should Care About Having A Drug-Free Workplace

**FACT SHEET**

## Because Substance Abuse in the Workplace Is a Widespread Problem

Alcohol and other drug abuse is widespread in our society. It affects us all in many ways. Although national, State, and local efforts have begun to show encouraging results, the problem of alcohol and other drug abuse remains a serious problem. No workplace is immune. According to the 2006 *National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, 74.9 percent of all adult illicit drug users are employed full or part time.<sup>1</sup> Most binge and heavy alcohol users are also employed full or part time.<sup>2</sup>

## Because Substance Abuse in the Workplace Can Have Serious Consequences

Substance abusing employees often do not make good employees. Studies show that, compared with non-substance abusers, they are more likely<sup>3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8</sup>

- ✓ To change jobs frequently
- ✓ To be late to or absent from work
- ✓ To be less productive employees
- ✓ To be involved in a workplace accident
- ✓ To file a workers' compensation claim



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Workplace substance abuse can also have a serious effect on people other than the abuser. For example, some studies suggest that working alongside a substance abuser can reduce nonabusers' morale and productivity.<sup>9</sup> It also is quite common for substance abusing workers who are involved in workplace accidents to injure other people (rather than themselves), especially if they work in safety-sensitive industries, such as the transportation or construction industry.<sup>10</sup>

## Because, in Some Cases, It's the Law

In 1986 the President signed an Executive order mandating that all Federal agencies be drug-free. In 1988, Congress passed the Drug-Free Workplace Act,<sup>11</sup> which requires Federal grantees and recipients of Federal contracts of \$100,000 or more to comply with the following:

- ✓ The employer must have a written policy that explains what is prohibited and the consequences of violating the policy.
- ✓ Employees must read and consent to the policy as a condition of employment on the project.
- ✓ The employer must have an awareness program to educate employees about alcohol and other drugs of abuse and addiction, the employer's policy, and available help, including counseling and other assistance.
- ✓ Employees must disclose any conviction for a drug-related offense in the workplace to the employer within 5 days after such conviction.
- ✓ Employers must disclose any conviction for a drug-related offense in the workplace to the Federal agency with which the employer has a grant or contract, within 10 days after receiving notice from the employee or others.



- ✓ Employers must make an ongoing effort to maintain a workplace free of drugs.

If you, as a Federal contractor, are found not to have a drug-free workplace, each contract awarded to you by any Federal agency may be suspended, terminated, or both. You may find yourself ineligible for award of any contract by any Federal agency, and for participation in any future procurement by any Federal agency, for up to 5 years.

Some employers are also subject to the provisions of the 1991 Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act. This Act requires that employees in certain safety-sensitive positions (such as in the aviation, trucking, railroad, mass transit, and pipeline industries) be tested for alcohol and drug use. The transportation industry has established additional policies on drug and alcohol testing, to ensure that workers operate aircraft, trains, trucks, and buses in a safe and responsible manner.

If you have questions about whether you are required to have a program in your workplace, call SAMHSA's free and confidential Workplace Helpline at 1.800.WORKPLACE for assistance.

### And Because Good Programs Can Help

Employers who have implemented drug-free workplace programs have important experiences<sup>12</sup> to share:

- ✓ Employers with successful drug-free workplace programs report improvements in morale and productivity and decreases in absenteeism, accidents, downtime, turnover, and theft.
- ✓ Employers with longstanding programs report better health status among, and decreased use of medical benefits by, many employees and family members.
- ✓ Some organizations with drug-free workplace programs qualify for incentives, such as decreased costs for workers' compensation and other kinds of insurance.<sup>13</sup>
- ✓ Employers find that employees, employee representatives, and unions often welcome drug-free workplace programs.<sup>14</sup> If you do not have a program, your employees may be wondering why.

**References:** **1.** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. 2007. *Results From the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings*. Rockville, Maryland, 27. **2.** Ibid, 37. **3.** Michael T. French, Gary A. Zarkin, and Laura J. Dunlap. 1998. "Illicit Drug Use, Absenteeism, and Earnings at Six U.S. Worksites." *Contemporary Economic Policy* 16(3):334-46. **4.** Terry C. Blum, Paul M. Roman, and Jack K. Martin. 1993. "Alcohol Consumption and Work Performance." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 54:61-70. **5.** Harold D. Holder and J. Blose. 1991. "A Comparison of Occupational and Nonoccupational Disability Payments and Work Absences for Alcoholics and Nonalcoholics." *Journal of Occupational Medicine* 33(4):453-57. **6.** Donna M. Bush and J.H. Autry III. 2002. "Substance Abuse in the Workplace: Epidemiology, Effects, and Industry." *Occupational Medicine* 17:13-25. **7.** J. Normand, S.D. Salyards, and J.J. Mahoney. 1990. "An Evaluation of Preemployment Drug Testing." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 75(6):629-39. **8.** Earl S. Pollack, Gary M. Franklin, Deborah Fulton-Kehoe, and Risana Chowdhury. 1998. "Risk of Job-Related Injury Among Construction Laborers With a Diagnosis of Substance Abuse." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 40(6):573-77. **9.** Hazelden. 2005. "Employees Report Coworkers Are Less Productive Due to Substance Abuse or Addiction Within Family." Found at [http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/mrab\\_2005\\_survey.page/](http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/mrab_2005_survey.page/). **10.** Ibid. **11.** U.S. House of Representatives. 1988. Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 U.S.C. 701-707. and U.S. House of Representatives. 1998. Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1998 U.S.C. 105-584. **12.** Joel Bennett and Wayne E. K. Lehman. 2003. *Preventing Workplace Substance Abuse: Beyond Drug Testing to Wellness*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. **13.** U.S. Department of Labor. "Florida State Law: Drug Free Workplace Act." Found at <http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/said/StateLaw.asp?id=694/>. **14.** Robert R. Bonds and Effie Bastes. 1999. "A Peer-Professional Team Intervention Approach in the Treatment of Drug and Alcohol Problems in the Workplace." Paper presented at the International Union of Railways World Conference on Occupational Health and Safety, September 23.