



How to Inform Employees About Your Drug-Free Workplace Policy

FACT SHEET

The method you choose to use to inform employees about a new drug-free workplace policy can show that the organization places a high priority on the policy and its goals. A written communication from the chief executive officer (CEO) or other top management, for example, is one good way of doing it. Such a communication—whether sent in printed form or through the organization intranet—can speak in a strong, positive manner about the importance of a drug-free workplace to the organization and to employee safety, health, and well-being. It can speak clearly about the rationale behind the program. And it can share information about the organization's history, mandates, and goals (for example, the highest standards of safety) that have informed the policy development process.

What to Address in a CEO Communication

- ✓ Briefly discuss the risks of drug and alcohol abuse to business in general, including increased absenteeism, tardiness, and use of sick leave and health services; higher insurance and workers' compensation costs; more injuries, fatalities, and thefts; lower productivity and product quality; and reduced employee morale and higher turnover.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance that the organization places on educating and helping employees avoid the problems associated with substance abuse.
- ✓ Note the connections between drugs and alcohol and health problems, and emphasize the organization's desire to help employees and their families avoid ill health and injury.
- ✓ Speak to the ways in which the program can benefit employees and their families. Examples of benefits include the employee assistance program (EAP) and other health promotion/wellness programs related to substance abuse. Note any services, such as the EAP, that have been instituted.
- ✓ Briefly outline the rationale for the policy and what it is designed to accomplish.
- ✓ Summarize the major benefits and procedures of the drug-free workplace policy.
- ✓ Note any services, such as an employee assistance program, that have been instituted.
- ✓ Announce upcoming policy-related articles, informational resources, meetings, trainings, and the like.
- ✓ Tell employees that the company is going to continue informing them about the drug-free workplace policy through upcoming articles on the company Web site, brochures in strategic locations, supervisor briefings, and question-and-answer vehicles.
- ✓ Indicate how employees can access the written policy document and any accompanying materials.

Ways to Reinforce the Message

- ✓ Make sure that all managers and supervisors are informed of the policy and its implications. This may be accomplished through specially tailored communications that address their particular roles along with staff meetings designed to provide a consistent understanding of the policy.
- ✓ Consider convening a meeting with union representatives, if applicable, to go over the final policy and its implications for union members.
- ✓ Consider convening meetings with representatives of special employee groups (such as health promotion advisory committees or safety teams). Involving employees can help inform employees about the policy and program.



- ✓ Make sure all employees get a copy of the written policy (downloadable, if appropriate, and as a hard copy).
- ✓ Consider creating a policy fact sheet that clearly conveys the major points and implications of the organization's drug-free workplace policy. You can use the following headings and speak to each one in straightforward terms that all employees can understand. If some of your employees are not fluent in English, also have a translation of the policy and its major points available (e.g., in Spanish):
 - **Rationale for the Policy**
The reason for the policy
What it is designed to do
How it was developed
 - **The Policy, the Program, and the Rules**
The employee behaviors that are expected
Exactly which substances and behaviors are prohibited
 - **Consequences and Appeals**
Precisely what will happen if an employee violates the policy
Procedures for determining whether an employee has violated the policy
How appeals will be handled
 - **Benefits and Assurances to Employees**
Efforts to help employees comply with the policy
How requests for help will be handled
How employee confidentiality will be protected
How fairness and consistency will be maintained
- ✓ If your organization has an intranet, consider creating a site devoted to the drug-free workplace policy and program. The site can continue to inform employees of policy and related issues and can include a question-and-answer function (e.g., employees can submit queries, a frequently asked question section can be featured). Many workplaces have customized GetFit and linked it to their intranet. See the fact sheet "Build Your Own GetFit Web Site"¹ at <http://www.buildasite.atgetfit.net/>.
- ✓ If there is no intranet in place, consider devising other means whereby employee questions can be answered (e.g., a box in which employees can anonymously submit questions that will be answered in an employee newsletter).
- ✓ Inform job applicants and new hires of the drug-free workplace policy. Include the policy in new employee application materials and in employee handbooks, if applicable.
- ✓ Continue to inform employees of the policy through such vehicles as
 - Safety meetings
 - Staff meetings
 - Supervisors trained to communicate about the policy
 - Communication from the EAP (in-house or other) describing how the EAP interacts with the drug-free workplace program
 - Orientation of new hires
- ✓ If there are new developments in the policy, be sure to inform your employees of their precise nature and content.

Reference

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Division of Workplace Programs. N.d. *GetFit: Online Workplace Health Promotion, Intervention and Prevention*. <http://www.buildasite.atgetfit.net/>.