

Drug-Free Workplace Programs

Add Value... to



Businesses, Communities and Lives

Working Partners for an Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace
U.S. Department of Labor
www.dol.gov/dol/workingpartners.htm

Helping Businesses Benefit from Being Drug Free

Workplace drug and alcohol abuse clearly compromises the safety of the workforce and the public by contributing to accidents and workplace injuries. But when employees abuse alcohol and other drugs, many other aspects of a business's operation, including its bottom line, bear the burden. Some costs—increased absences, accidents and errors—are obvious. Others, such as low morale and high illness rates, are less so, but the effects are equally harmful. The vast majority of drug users work, and when they arrive at work, they don't leave their problems outside the door.

Consider the following:

- Out of 13.4 million illicit drug users aged 18 or older in 2001, 10.2 million (76.4 percent) worked either full or part time. ¹
- Between 10 and 20 percent of the nation's workers who die on the job test positive for alcohol or other drugs. ²
- Nearly 77 percent (10.7 million) of illicit drug users use marijuana. ³ Six out of every 10 workers who test positive for drug use test positive for marijuana. ⁴
- Industries with the highest rates of drug use include many of the same industries at high-risk of occupational injuries, such as construction, mining, manufacturing and wholesale. ⁵

The good news is that employers have enormous power to improve the safety and health of their workplaces by implementing drug-free workplace programs. Educating employees about the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse and encouraging individuals with alcohol and drug problems to seek help also adds value to their businesses and communities. Many employers integrate drug-free workplace components into their overall safety programs and find it key to reducing on-the-job accidents and injuries.

A comprehensive drug-free workplace program generally includes five elements: a policy, supervisor training, employee education, employee assistance and drug testing. Although employers may choose not to include all five components, it is recommended that all be explored. Research shows that more components may lead to a more effective program.

Before considering each element, employers should examine the needs of their workforce and business to ensure the program they design will fit their company. Because every business is unique, there is no one right way to establish a program. A careful assessment will determine which elements are the most feasible and beneficial, as well as which may be unnecessary or unsuitable. Many companies find it helpful to seek employee input during this process.

Drug-Free Workplace Tools and Resources

*Although not required by OSHA, drug-free workplace programs are natural complements to other initiatives that help ensure safe and healthful workplaces and add value to American businesses and communities. The U.S. Department of Labor's **Working Partners for an Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace** program offers a variety of tools and resources to help employers get started. **Working Partners** raises awareness about the impact drugs and alcohol have on the workplace and provides information on how to establish drug-free workplace programs that protect worker safety and health.*

Sources:

- 1 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (2001)
- 2 Analysis of Toxicology Reports Work-Related Fatal Injuries in 1998 (forthcoming)
- 3 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (2001)
- 4 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (2001)
- 5 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (2001)

All Working Partners tools and resources—including information about how to develop a drug-free workplace policy from start to finish and ready-to-use supervisor training and employee education materials—are available online at www.dol.gov/dol/workingpartners.htm.