

4 Employee Assistance

Employee Assistance is a work organization's resource designed to enhance employee and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification and resolution of personal and productivity issues including those that may stem from substance abuse.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are an excellent benefit to employees and their families and clearly demonstrate employers' respect for their staff. They also offer an alternative to dismissal and minimize an employer's legal vulnerability by demonstrating efforts to support employees.

In addition to counseling and referrals, many EAPs offer other related services, such as supervisor training and employee education. At minimum, businesses should maintain a resource file from which employees can access information about community-based resources, treatment programs and helplines.

5 Drug Testing

Some employers decide to drug test their employees for a variety of reasons, such as deterring and detecting drug use, as well as providing concrete evidence for intervention, referral to treatment and/or disciplinary action. Before deciding to conduct testing, employers should consider a few factors, including:

Who will be tested? Options may include all staff, job applicants and/or employees in safety-sensitive positions.

When will tests be conducted? Possibilities include pre-employment, upon reasonable suspicion or for-cause, post-accident, randomly, periodically and post-rehabilitation.

Which drugs will be tested for? Options include testing applicants and employees for illegal drugs and testing employees for a broader range of substances, including alcohol and certain prescription drugs.

How will tests be conducted? Different testing modes are available, and many states have laws that dictate which may and may not be used.

Employers also must be familiar with any local, state and Federal laws or any collective bargaining agreements that may impact when, where and how testing is performed. It is strongly recommended that legal counsel be sought before starting any testing program.



Steps to a Drug-Free Workplace

The **Working Partners** program was developed by the U.S. Department of Labor to help businesses establish and maintain drug-free workplaces.

For more information, please visit the **Working Partners** Web site at www.dol.gov/workingpartners.



Working Partners
for an Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace




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Employers implement drug-free workplace programs to protect their businesses from the impact of drug and alcohol abuse. A drug-free workplace program generally includes five components:

- 1) **Drug-Free Workplace Policy**
- 2) **Supervisor Training**
- 3) **Employee Education**
- 4) **Employee Assistance**
- 5) **Drug Testing**

Although employers may choose not to include all five components, it is recommended that all be explored when developing a drug-free workplace program. Research shows that more components may lead to a more effective program.

Before considering the five components, employers should examine the needs of their workforce and organization and take steps to ensure the program they design will work well in their company. Because every business is unique, there is no one right way to establish a drug-free workplace program. Rather, each organization's program should match its specific needs. A careful assessment will determine which program elements are the most feasible and beneficial, as well as which may be unnecessary or unsuitable. Furthermore, many companies find it helpful to ask for input from employees during this process.

For more information about examining the needs of your organization and implementing the steps to a drug-free workplace program, use the Drug-Free Workplace Advisor, a free, online interactive tool that helps employers create tailored drug-free workplace programs. The Advisor is available at www.dol.gov/elaws/drugfree.htm.

1 Written Drug-Free Workplace Policy

A written drug-free workplace policy is the foundation of a drug-free workplace program. Every organization's policy should be unique and tailored to meet its specific needs; however, all effective policies have a few aspects in common, including:

- ▶ **Why the policy is being implemented.** Rationale can be as simple as a company being committed to protecting the safety, health and well being of its employees and patrons and recognizing that abuse of alcohol and other drugs compromises this dedication.
- ▶ **A clear description of prohibited behaviors.** At a minimum, this should include the following statement: "The use, possession, transfer or sale of illegal drugs by employees is prohibited."
- ▶ **An explanation of the consequences for violating the policy.** These may include discipline up to and including termination and/or referral for assistance. Consequences should be consistent with existing personnel policies and procedures and any applicable state laws.

Sharing a policy with all employees is essential for success; therefore, employers should be certain that all employees are aware of the policy and drug-free workplace program.

2 Supervisor Training

After developing a policy, an organization should train those individuals closest to its workforce—supervisors. Training should ensure that supervisors understand:

- ▶ The drug-free workplace policy
- ▶ Ways to recognize and deal with employees who have performance problems that may be related to alcohol and other drugs
- ▶ How to refer employees to available assistance

In relation to a drug-free workplace program, supervisors' responsibilities should include monitoring employees' performance, staying alert to and documenting performance problems, and enforcing the policy. Supervisors should not, however, be expected to diagnose alcohol- and drug-related problems or provide counseling to employees who may have them.

Note: If supervisors are responsible for making referrals for drug testing based on reasonable suspicion, they also must be trained on how to make that determination.

3 Employee Education

A drug and alcohol education program provides employees with the information they need to fully understand, cooperate with and benefit from their company's drug-free workplace program.

Effective employee education programs provide company-specific information, such as details of the drug-free workplace policy, as well as generalized information about the nature of alcohol and drug addiction; its impact on work performance, health and personal life; and types of help available for individuals with related problems.

All employees should participate, and the message should be delivered on an ongoing basis through a variety of means. Forums for employee education may include home mailings, workplace displays, brown-bag lunches, guest speakers, seminars and sessions at new employee orientation.

