



Drug Testing Facts and Statistics

FACT SHEET

Why Do Most Workplaces Include Drug Testing in Their Programs for Drug-Free Workplaces?

According to the American Management Association, 62 percent of employers in the United States had some sort of drug testing program in place in 2004.¹ Employers include drug testing in their drug-free workplace programs for a variety of reasons:

- ✓ **To commit** their workplaces to the overall health and safety of their employees, by reducing drug-related injuries, accidents, and crime.
- ✓ **To meet** Federal or State regulations that require drug testing for specific jobs.
- ✓ **To protect** the reputation and financial interests of the workplaces.
- ✓ **To develop** environments that have increasingly negative attitudes toward drug use and abuse. Workplaces are excellent places for reaching many individuals who are in need of drug prevention and intervention services, as national surveys suggest that about 75 percent of illicit drug users over 18 are employed either part or full time.²

What Types of Drug Tests Are Administered?

Numerous biological specimens are used for drug testing. Major types include urine, hair follicle, oral fluid, sweat, and blood. Currently, federally regulated workplace drug testing programs collect only urine, as do many private sector programs. Urine drug testing is recognized as the gold standard because of its proven accuracy, reliability, and fairness. Researchers are analyzing other methods for possible addition to the list of approved methods.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) requires that certain organizations test for the following five categories of drugs, which are known as "the SAMHSA 5":

- ✓ Marijuana
- ✓ Cocaine
- ✓ Amphetamines
- ✓ Opiates
- ✓ Phencyclidine (PCP)

Organizations seeking additional knowledge about other drugs may expand their tests to search for alcohol, barbiturates, methadone, MDMA (ecstasy), hydrocodone (Lortab, Vicodin), methaqualone (Quaaludes), benzodiazepines (valium, Xanax, Librium, Serax, Rohypnol), and propoxyphene (Darvon).

Do Drug Tests Really Work?

Current drug testing procedures can accurately detect adulterated samples. It is therefore increasingly difficult for those being tested for drugs to cheat on the tests. This is due to the increased attention placed on this issue by collection sites, certified laboratories, and Medical Review Officers (MROs).

For example, increasing numbers of organizations use trained drug testing technicians, who are brought into the workplaces to collect specimens from workers while they are on the job. In addition, guided by the SAMHSA specimen collection manual, special precautions can be taken to ensure that specimen donors do not substitute or adulterate their specimens. Finally, certified laboratories (which analyze the specimens) can measure the specific gravity, pH, creatinine levels, and temperature of the specimens, to determine valid and reliable positive and negative results as well as deviations in collected specimens.



How Much Does Drug Testing Cost?

The cost of testing can vary dramatically, depending on the type of test and the number of employees being tested. Conservative estimates for standard workplace urine tests range from \$25 to \$75 per test.

Who Pays for Drug Tests?

In most cases, employers pay for the drug tests. Occasionally, employers require that employees pay for the tests. However, if the results are negative, the employers often reimburse the employees. If employees are expected to pay for the drug tests, this should be stated in the workplace's written drug policy.

Who Does the Testing?

Federal agencies and employers regulated by the U.S. Department of Transportation are required to use U.S. Department of Health and Human Services–certified drug testing laboratories. In addition, they are also required to use MROs to review the test results reported by the labs before reporting the final result to the employer. It is recommended (though not required) that all employers include this right in their workplace drug testing programs. According to SAMHSA: “[A]n MRO is defined as a licensed physician who receives laboratory results, has knowledge of substance abuse disorders, and has appropriate medical training to interpret and evaluate an individual’s positive test results together with his or her medical history and any other relevant biomedical information. Only individuals holding either a Doctor of Medicine or Doctor of Osteopathy degree may serve as MROs for federally regulated programs.”³ Applying consistent methods, such as those just mentioned, is always a good idea for other employers as well, because these methods have been proven to produce results that are forensically and scientifically supportable and can reduce litigation costs over time.

When Are Tests Usually Administered?

Employees may be tested at any of the five following times:

- ✓ **Preemployment** (to decrease the chance that a current drug user will be hired)
- ✓ **"For cause" or "reasonable suspicion"** (when an employee shows signs of not being fit for duty or has a documented pattern of unsafe behavior)
- ✓ **At random** (to discourage drug use among all employees)
- ✓ **Post-accident** (following an accident or incident involving unsafe behavior)
- ✓ **Posttreatment** (following treatment for substance abuse)

What Happens to Employees Who Fail Drug Tests?

Depending on the workplace and the circumstances, employees who test positive may be referred to employee assistance programs for counseling and other assistance, to programs for more extensive treatment, or for disciplinary action, such as suspension or dismissal, or some combination of these. Employees can be suspended or fired for positive test results, but these are extreme consequences. Studies indicate that prevention, early identification, early intervention, and treatment are generally more cost effective than termination and replacement of employees who test positive for drugs.

For more details on drug testing and how it works, consult the drug testing section of this Kit.

References

¹ American Management Association. 2004. *Workplace Testing Survey: Medical Testing*. Available at http://www.amanet.org/research/pdfs/Medical_testing_04.pdf/.

² SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies. 2007. *Results From the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings*. Rockville, Maryland, 27.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Division of Workplace Programs. 2005. *Medical Review Officer Manual for Federal Agency Workplace Drug Testing Programs*. Rockville, Maryland.