

Drug-Free Workplace Program Components

1. 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 that 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.** They 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 all policies 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.

****Please see the sample policies for additional language that could be included in your drug-free workplace policy.****

2. Supervisor Training:

After developing a drug-free workplace 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; and
- 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 the 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 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.

4. Employee Assistance:

A critical component of a drug-free workplace program is providing assistance or support to employees who have problems with alcohol and other drugs.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are generally the most effective vehicle for addressing poor workplace performance that may stem from an employee's personal problems, including the abuse of alcohol or other drugs. 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 a minimum, businesses should maintain a resource file from which employees can access information about community-based resources, treatment programs and helplines.

5. Drug Testing:

Drug testing is one action an employer can take to determine if employees or job applicants are using drugs. It can identify evidence of recent use of alcohol, prescription drugs and illicit drugs. Currently, drug testing does not test for *impairment* or whether a person's behavior is, or was, impacted by drugs. Drug testing works best when implemented based on a clear, written policy that is shared with all employees, along with employee education about the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse, supervisor training on the signs and symptoms of alcohol and drug abuse, and an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to provide help for employees who may have an alcohol or drug problem.

**In the state of Colorado (per DOL) drug testing must be paid by the employer and employees must be compensated for the time it takes them to complete the required testing.

Information adapted from United States Department of Labor – Working Partners
<http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/workingpartners/dfworkplace/dfwp.asp>

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