

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Illicit drug and alcohol use by employees can be a great liability to your company. An estimated 14.8 million Americans are illicit drug users and small businesses are hit the hardest, as drug users tend to find work there more often than in large businesses. Workers' comp premiums and payouts can be affected, also, as up to 40% of industrial fatalities and 47% of injuries can be linked to alcohol consumption and alcoholism. To protect your business, it is very important to have a Drug-Free Workplace policy in place before any accidents occur. The following are tips for implementing your policy in your company, as laid out by the Department of Labor.

Have it in writing. Be sure to have your drug-free workplace policy in writing. While you should tailor the policy to your company's needs, all policies should include:

Why the policy is being implemented, such as a commitment to safety, health, and success.

A clear description of prohibited behaviors. Include the statement, "The use, possession, transfer, or sale of illegal drugs by employees is prohibited."

Consequences of violating the policy, such as discipline up to and including termination. Be consistent with state laws.

Train your Supervisors. Before rolling out the policy, make sure your supervisors understand the policy, ways to recognize drug and alcohol users and how to deal with them, and how to refer them to assistance. Although supervisors can identify and refer drug and alcohol users for discipline or treatment centers, they should never attempt to diagnose or provide counseling to employees themselves.

Train Your Employees. When you begin your drug-free workplace policy, all employees should be called together to be informed of it and have a chance to ask questions. Let them know the details of the policy, as well as general information about alcohol and drug abuse and ways it can harm their work performance, health, and personal life. Educate your employees continuously, such as through posters, guest speakers, and brown-bag lunches.

Assist Your Employees. An important part of a drug-free workplace policy is to include an Employee Assistance Program for someone who needs help dealing with addiction. Businesses should at least keep a file with information on community-based resources, treatment programs, and help lines.

Perform Drug Testing. Be sure to decide how you will perform drug testing while developing your policy. Decide who will be tested and at what stage of employment, which drugs will be tested for, and how the tests will be conducted. Nextep is experienced at making these decisions and setting up tests, so please contact Nextep for help with this. Make sure your testing never discriminates against a class of workers, or that certain individuals are singled out. Testing should always be private, between only the employee and supervisor.

Nextep has assisted several companies in developing Drug-Free Workplace policies and would be happy to help you develop yours. For more information, call us at 888-811-5150.

Source: www.dol.gov/workingpartners



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CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS:

3550 West Robinson
Norman, OK 73072

tel: 405.292.1428
fax: 405.292.1436

toll free: 888.811.5150
toll free fax: 888.811.5161