

Importance of a Drug-Free Work Environment

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Before you begin

Determine what goals your company is attempting to accomplish by implementing a drug-free workplace program. This will allow for the development of a drug-free workplace program that meets the needs and goals of your company.

Introduction

There are several reasons companies establish drug-free work environments. Ask the participants to suggest reasons for implementing a drug-free program.

Reasons they may suggest might include improved productivity, lower absenteeism, prevention of theft, improved safety and improved morale. An effective drug-free program will also help prevent work-related injuries and illnesses. This can help employers achieve long-term safety and cost-savings benefits.

If you think drugs and alcohol do not affect your workplace, consider the following:

- 47 percent of serious workplace accidents and 40 percent of workplace accidents resulting in fatalities have drug or alcohol involvement (Occupational Medicine);
- The use of alcohol or drugs accounts for 38 percent to 50 percent of all workers' compensation claims (National Council on Compensation Insurance).
- More than 90 percent of alcoholics and 74 percent of drug addicts are employed (National Institute on Drug Abuse, Department of Health and Human Services);
- In an average U.S. company, 15 percent to 17 percent of employees affect their workplaces through substance abuse (Bureau of Labor Statistics);
- On average, an employee with inappropriate substance use costs their employer \$7,000 to \$25,000 annually (Small Business Administration).

Discussion

If your company has determined a drug-free workplace would be beneficial, begin by researching and using available resources. A company needs to ensure it implements a drug-free policy that meets the needs of the company. In addition, your program must adhere to established federal and state regulations.

Five major components must be in every drug-free workplace program.

1. A written substance policy

This is a crucial document for implementing a drug-free workplace program. The policy should clearly communicate all elements of the program and explain in detail the drug/alcohol testing rules and guidelines of the program. Never use a generic policy; make sure to create a policy specific to your company. A company should always consult with legal counsel when developing the policy.

2. Employee awareness and education

It is the company's responsibility to provide employee awareness and education. It is imperative that employees are educated on the company's drug-free program. A certified drug-free trainer should do training.

Supervisor training

Supervisors must have a comprehensive understanding of their role in a drug-free program. A certified drug-free trainer should present this training.

1. Drug and alcohol testing

An employer must determine the types of drugs and alcohol testing to implement. Examples include the following:

1. Pre-employment, post-accident;
2. Random;
3. Follow-up to treatment;
4. Reasonable suspicion.
5. The employer must also determine who to test, what drugs to test for, appropriate cut-off levels and what protocols and laboratory to use. At a minimum, testing should follow U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) testing guidelines.

2. Employee assistance

All employees should have an understanding of the company's employee assistance program. The employee assistance program can range from an employer providing a list of available resources to establishing an employee assistance program.

BWC's Drug Free Safety Program (DFSP)

BWC's DFSP revolves around safety. It incorporates a company's drug-free efforts into its overall safety culture. BWC designed the DFSP to address drug/alcohol's impact on work-related injuries and prevent future claims that result from substance use and abuse. BWC encourages a safer work environment advising businesses to embed a drug-free policy within their company specific safety policy.

There are strict requirements that need met, as well as specific testing and reporting deadlines. For more detailed information about BWC's DFSP or to enroll in the program, go to <http://www.ohiobwc.com/employer/programs/dfspinfo/dfspdescription.asp>.

References

Working Partners for An Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace
<http://www.dol.gov/workingpartners>

Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS)
www.odadas.state.oh.us

Department of Labor Policy Builder Tool
www.dol.gov/elaws/asp/drugfree/drugs/screen1.asp

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