



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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Reasonable Suspicion Drug and Alcohol Testing

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In these critically stressful times, statistics show that overall drug and alcohol use has dramatically increased. Opioid addictions have escalated. Alcohol sales have soared. When a supervisor becomes aware or is concerned that an employee may be under the influence of substances on the job, knowing how to proceed is important. Reasonable Suspicion testing can be a very useful tool to identify an issue and provide an avenue for support.

Review Current Policies and Procedures

Some professions and employers have clear and documented protocols for reasonable suspicion testing. Department of Transportation employees, FAA, medical professionals and union workers are just some examples of employers that follow mandated testing regulations in defined drug and alcohol policies. Other employer policies can be more ambiguous or even void of clearly defined procedures for assessing impairment on the job.

Employers may wish to consult with their legal counsel for appropriate direction on how to add, create, or clarify specific testing policies, if necessary. The goal

of reasonable suspicion testing is to keep both the employees and their work environment safe; provide appropriate chemical dependency assessment and treatment resources if necessary; and help employees retain their jobs.

Special Challenges for Work from Home Employees

Testing for reasonable suspicion becomes more challenging when the workplace and home are one in the same. Employees working from home (WFH) may deny, make excuses, and attempt to hide their substance use issues. There is no in-person witness to the behaviors. Even virtual video evidence is not always reliable. Unless a remote employee self-admits a problem, it may be very difficult to implement testing protocols. Providing transportation to offsite testing labs becomes complicated or impossible.

At these times, it is important that the supervisor expresses compassionate concern to the employee, while reminding them of the company's drug and alcohol policy. The behaviors of concern are addressed while indicating possible disciplinary steps if warranted. At best, a worker may self-admit current struggles with alcohol or substances, and welcome the assistance

See Page 2 for Commonly Observed Factors

Commonly Observed Factors

- **Speech**

- Slurred
- Incoherent
- Loud/boisterous
- Rapid/excessive talk
- Inappropriate responses

- **Appearance**

- Constricted/large pupils
- Bloodshot/watery eyes
- Unfocused/blank stare
- Pale/flushed complexion
- Disheveled clothes/grooming
- Excess sweating

- **Odors**

- Alcohol smell
- Marijuana smell
- Excessive cologne

- **Behaviors**

- Witnessed drug/alcohol intake
- Possession of drug paraphernalia
- Loss of coordination / balance
- Wide mood / energy swings
- Erratic or abnormal actions
- Hostility or belligerence
- Unable to concentrate/focus
- Paranoia / hallucinations
- Unusually energetic / hyper
- Withdrawing from co-workers
- Insomnia/ falling asleep at work
- Confusion / disorientation
- Trembling or shaking

- **Workplace Impact**

- Declining performance/productivity
- Increased /excessive absences or tardiness
- Prolonged breaks or lunch hours
- Frequent or intense arguments
- Resistance to directions or authority
- Carelessness or safety violations
- On the job accidents
- Disappearance from worksite on shift
- Co-worker concerns or complaints

Informal or Mandatory EAP Referral

First Choice Health EAP has licensed clinical staff ready to consult with employers about any workplace concern. If there is no disciplinary action, an employee may be encouraged to voluntarily call the EAP confidentially for information and resources related to drug and alcohol assessment and treatment options. If a final written warning is in place, the supervisor may wish to initiate a "last chance" EAP mandatory referral.

The EAP can coach HR staff and supervisors on how to get started, review the process and send the necessary release and signature documents. The EAP case manager will monitor employee compliance and keep the employer informed along the way. We are available anytime you need support: (800) 777-4114 or www.firstchoiceep.com.