Costs of Drugs on the Job Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Costs of Drugs on the Job Safety Talk

Individuals who come to work under the influence of drugs and alcohol are a big concern for many employers across the world. In the United States, it is estimated over 60% of employers conduct pre-employment drug screening. The cost of these tests are anywhere from $20 to $60 a piece.

WHAT' S THE DANGER

THREE DRUG ABUSE PROBLEMS IN THE WORKPLACE

Safety- Individuals under the influence of the drugs are a danger to everyone at the worksite. Drugs also negatively affect person's ability to make decisions and influence a person to take more risks than they normally would if they were sober.

Production- Individuals under the influence of drugs are almost always less efficient than when they are sober. Even if the drug is considered a stimulant, there are many side effects or other consequences due to using these drugs. There is more absenteeism by individuals who abuse drugs.

Costs- According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Inc., the costs of drug abuse is over $81 billion annually in the United States. When a company has to spend a significant amount of money randomly drug testing employees, dealing with the consequences of lost production, and investigating safety incidents, there is less money for the other areas of the business.

PROBLEMS CAUSED IN THE WORKPLACE

Absenteeism and loss of production, are problems that alcohol and drug abuse can cause on the job including the following:

- Tardiness/sleeping on the job
- Hangover or withdrawal affecting job performance
- Poor decision making
- Loss of efficiency
- Theft
- Lower morale of co-workers
- Higher turnover
- Training of new employees
- Disciplinary procedure

Signs of Workplace Drug Abuse and Addiction

Someone abusing drugs at work might behave differently from their colleagues in crucial ways.

- Openly talking about money problems
- A decline in personal appearance or hygiene
- Complaints of failing relationships at home
- Taking time off for vague illnesses or family problems

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

GET HELP

Work can be an important place to address substance use issues. Employers and employees can collaborate to design policies which outline what is an acceptable code of behavior and what is not. By establishing or promoting programs such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), employers can help employees more directly or provide referrals to community services.

The policy can cover substance use issues, or it can use an overall approach such as impairment in the workplace. The main goal is that workplaces are encouraged to establish a procedure or policy so that help can be provided in a professional and consistent manner. It is important for supervisors and managers to have a resource or procedure that they can rely on if the need

arises. Employees need to know that everyone will be treated the same way. These actions help to reduce the stigma associated with substance use. When stigma is reduced, it is hoped that people will seek help without fear, and will speak openly about substance use issues. Early treatment and support is encouraged.

Managers and Supervisors should be educated in how to recognize and deal with substance use issues and employees should be offered educational programs. Note it is not the role of the supervisor or employer to diagnose a possible substance use or dependency problem. Their role is to identify if an employee is impaired, and to take the appropriate steps as per the organization's policy.

Training/Prohibitions

- Train supervisors to monitor employees carefully. Share drug prevention information and hang posters with OSHA drug prevention guidelines.
- Prohibit alcohol on the premises to discourage drinking and make it known that you'll schedule periodic, unannounced drug testing. Employees will be far less likely to use drugs, knowing they could be tested at any time and lose their job.

FINAL WORD

Drug abuse in the workplace is an issue for everyone involved in the company. Not only is it a safety issue for those individuals around someone who is abusing drugs, but there are other consequences. When production is slowed down and costs go up, less money is available for other areas of the business. Speak up to a supervisor if you see a coworker who may be having issues with drugs.