

Supervisor Training

Working Partners for an
Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace



Provided by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy
U.S. Department of Labor

Overview of Drug-Free Workplace Policy

The Drug-Free Workplace Policy accomplishes two major things:

- Sends a clear message that use of alcohol and drugs in the workplace is prohibited
- Encourages employees who have problems with alcohol and other drugs to voluntarily seek help

The Drug-Free Workplace Policy exists to:

- Protect the health and safety of all employees, customers and the public
- Safeguard employer assets from theft and destruction
- Protect trade secrets
- Maintain product quality and company integrity and reputation
- Comply with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 or any other applicable laws

Supervisors' Responsibilities

It is your responsibility, as a supervisor, to:

- Maintain a safe, secure and productive environment for employees
- Evaluate and discuss performance with employees
- Treat all employees fairly
- Act in a manner that does not demean or label people

It is **NOT** your responsibility, as a supervisor, to:

- Diagnose drug and alcohol problems
- Have all the answers
- Provide counseling or therapy
- Be a police officer

Legally sensitive areas:

- Safeguard employee's confidentiality
- Ensure the policy is clearly communicated
- Establish procedures to thoroughly investigate alleged violations
- Provide due process and ample opportunity for response to allegations
- If testing is included, ensure quality control and confirmation of positive tests
- Conform to union contracts, if applicable

Identifying Performance Problems and Handling Potential Crisis Situations

- Distinguishing between a crisis situation and a performance problem
- Crisis situations are less common than performance problems and can consist of:
 - Dangerous behavior
 - Threatening behavior
 - Obvious impairment
 - Possession of alcohol and other drugs
 - Illegal activity

- Questions to consider when investigating a potential drug or alcohol crisis situation
- Recommended actions to take when confronted with a possible drug or alcohol situation

Recognizing Problems

Addiction:

The irresistible compulsion to use alcohol and other drugs despite adverse consequences. It is characterized by repeated failures to control use, increased tolerance and increased disruption in the family.

Ongoing performance problems that do not respond to normal supervisory actions may be signs of addiction and other personal problems and may require more intervention. Examples of common performance problems that may be indicators of underlying addiction include:

- Poor attendance - tardiness, unexplained absences, long lunches
- Co-workers or customer complaints
- Mistakes and missed deadlines

Intervention and Referral

Steps to take when you have identified a performance problem:

- Document the performance problem
- Get yourself ready
- Set the stage
- Use constructive confrontation
- Refer for assistance
- Follow up on progress towards meeting performance goals

Constructive confrontation:

- Tell employee you are concerned about his/her performance
- State problem
- Refer to documentation of specific events
- Avoid over-generalizations
- Ask for explanation

- Avoid getting involved in discussions of personal problems
- Try to get employee to acknowledge what you see as the problem
- State what must be done to correct problem
- Set time frame for performance improvement
- Specify consequences if problem continues

Protecting Confidentiality

For supervisor referrals to be effective, an employee needs to know that:

- Problems will not be made public
- Conversations with an EAP professional - or other referral agent - are private and will be protected
- All information related to performance issues will be maintained in his/her personnel file

- Information about referral to treatment, however, will be kept separately
- Information about treatment for addiction or mental illness is not a matter of public record and cannot be shared without a signed release from the employee
- If an employee chooses to tell coworkers about his/her private concerns, that is his/her decisions
- When an employee tells his/her supervisor something in confidence, supervisors are obligated to protect that disclosure

If EAP services are available, employees are also assured that:

- EAP records are separate from personnel records and can be accessed only with a signed release from the employee
- EAP professionals are bound by a code of ethics to protect the confidentiality of the employees and family members that they serve
- There are clear limits on when and what information an EAP professional can share and with whom

However, there are some limits on confidentiality that may require:

- Disclosure of child abuse, elder abuse and serious threats of homicide or suicide as dictated by state law
- Reporting participation in an EAP to the referring supervisor
- Reporting the results of assessment and evaluation following a positive drug test
- Verifying medical information to authorize release time or satisfy fitness-for-duty concerns as specified in company policy
- Revealing medical information to the insurance company in order to qualify for coverage under a benefits plan

Continued Supervision

After constructive confrontation and referral, the employee will need:

- Continuing feedback about behavior and performance
- Encouragement to follow through with continuing care and support groups
- Accurate performance appraisals and fair treatment
- Time to adjust to doing things differently
- Respect for his or her privacy
- Open lines of communication
- Corrective action if old behaviors reappear

Enabling

Enabling: Action that you take that protects the employee from the consequences of his/her actions and actually helps the employee to NOT deal with the problem.

Examples of enabling:

- Covering Up
- Rationalizing
- Withdrawing/Avoiding
- Blaming
- Controlling
- Threatening

Supervisor Traps

- Sympathy
- Excuses
- Apology
- Diversions
- Innocence
- Anger
- Pity
- Tears

Dos for Supervisors

- **DO** emphasize that you only are concerned with work performance or conduct
- **DO** have documentation or performance in front of you when you talk with the employee
- **DO** remember that many problems get worse without assistance
- **DO** emphasize that conversations with an EAP, if applicable, are confidential
- **DO** explain that an EAP, if applicable, is voluntary and exists to help the employee
- **DO** call an EAP, if applicable, to discuss how to make a referral

Don'ts for Supervisors

- **DON'T** try to diagnose the problem
- **DON'T** moralize. Limit comments to job performance and conduct issues only
- **DON'T** discuss alcohol and drug use
- **DON'T** be misled by sympathy-evoking tactics
- **DON'T** cover up. If you protect people, it enables them to stay the same
- **DON'T** make threats that you do not intend to carry out