

MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS

"DEALING WITH DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE: FOR MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS"

Part of the "GENERAL SAFETY SERIES"

Quality Safety and Health Products, for Today...and Tomorrow

OUTLINE OF MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS

The following outline summarizes the major points of information presented in the course on "Dealing with Drug and Alcohol Abuse... for Managers and Supervisors". The outline can be used to survey the course before taking it on a computer, as well as to review the course when a computer is not available

- **As a manager, you know that it's important to train your employees to do their jobs safely.**
 - If they work with machinery or tools, you require them to wear safety glasses and other personal protective equipment.
 - And you make sure that they handle hazardous materials safely.

- **You do these things because you and your company are responsible for employees' safety and health while they are at work.**

- **But what if someone has a drinking problem, or is taking drugs that could cause them to have an on-the-job accident?**

- **When substance abusers arrive at work, they don't leave their problems at the door.**
 - What these employees are doing both on and off-duty could cause them to have a serious accident.

- **Substance abuse is a huge, worldwide problem. In the United States alone there are:**
 - Over 50 million binge drinkers.
 - 17 million illegal drug users.
 - Almost 15 million people who abuse prescription medications.

- **Most substance abusers have jobs.**
 - In fact, it is estimated that one out of every ten workers has a substance abuse problem.
 - It is likely that your company will employ a substance abuser at some point.

- **An employee with an alcohol or drug problem can:**
 - Decrease productivity.
 - Create a hostile work environment.
 - Damage your company's good name.
- **Worst of all, the actions of a worker who is "under the influence" can completely undermine your company's efforts to keep people safe.**
- **Substance abusers have more than three times as many accidents and injuries as typical employees.**
 - They use two times the amount of medical benefits.
 - They file more than twice as many workers' compensation claims.
- **As a result it is estimated that drug and alcohol use in the workplace cost American businesses over 100 billion dollars every year, through:**
 - Higher insurance rates.
 - Damage to equipment and materials.
 - Other related expenses.
- **The "price" of substance abuse cannot be calculated in financial terms alone.**
 - A substance abuser's family, friends and coworkers can all pay a heavy emotional toll.
 - And if the abuser causes an accident, someone may even lose their life.
- **Lawsuits stemming from a substance abuser's actions can also directly jeopardize your career and financial well being.**
 - You must be able to recognize and deal with these situations before they get out of control.
- **As a manager, it is your responsibility to keep your workforce safe and productive.**
 - Ensuring that your employees are sober and drug-free is one of the most important duties that you have.

- **Alcohol and drug abuse in the workplace is such a serious problem that the Department of Labor, Department of Transportation and other Federal and state agencies have laws and regulations regarding substance abuse that you must be familiar with.**
- **OSHA's "General Duty Clause" requires employers to provide working conditions "which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm."**
 - Substance abuse is considered a "recognized hazard", so to be in compliance you must ensure that an employee who appears to be using alcohol or drugs does not pose a danger to themselves or others.
- **If your company employs "transportation employees" with "safety-sensitive" jobs, such as truck drivers, dispatchers or mechanics, then you will have to follow the Department of Transportation's "Procedures for Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Programs" (Rule 49 CFR Part 40).**
 - This regulation requires that these employees undergo random alcohol and drug testing.
 - It also specifies that they must be removed from "safety-sensitive" tasks and be given a substance abuse test if there is a "reasonable suspicion" that they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- **At the same time, since substance abuse is considered an illness, you must be careful that you don't violate an employee's privacy or other "civil" rights.**
 - If your company employs 15 or more people you must comply with the "American's with Disabilities Act."
- **This stipulates that you may not "discriminate" against a worker who is trying to overcome a substance abuse problem.**

- **Even when this act does not apply, an abuser may be able to file a lawsuit and collect damages if it appears as though they were discharged or otherwise punished without being given a chance to enter a substance abuse treatment program.**
- **Dealing with substance abuse takes more than just conforming to various regulations. You need to actively strive to have a work environment that encourages sobriety.**
 - That's why it's important for all companies, regardless of their size, to have "drug and alcohol-free workplace" policies and procedures in place.
- **At a minimum, your company should have:**
 - A written "drug and alcohol policy".
 - Periodic education sessions on substance abuse prevention for all employees.
 - In-depth training for managers and supervisors on preventing and dealing with substance abuse.
- **Your company may also:**
 - Conduct various forms of alcohol and drug testing to identify substance abusers.
- **Provide resources, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), to help employees and their families deal with substance abuse and other issues.**
- **At the "heart" of this effort to keep substance abuse at bay is your company's written drug and alcohol policy.**
 - This should be distributed to everyone at your facility, including temporary employees and contract workers.
- **The policy should clearly state what behaviors employees are prohibited from engaging in, such as:**
 - Consuming alcohol immediately prior to or during the workday.
 - Possessing, selling, distributing or using illegal drugs.
 - Operating machinery or motor vehicles while using medications that can impair the senses.

- **The policy should reflect both Federal and state laws, but be tailored to "fit" your company's specific needs.**
 - It should also take into account the type of work that your employees perform.
 - For instance, if you have armed security guards on staff, the drug and alcohol policy should spell out that they must not handle firearms if they have been drinking or using drugs of any kind (including medications that may cause drowsiness).

- **The consequences for breaking the rules should be spelled out in the policy as well. They can include:**
 - Suspension from "safety sensitive" duties.
 - Mandatory participation in a substance abuse rehabilitation program.
 - For serious offenses, termination.

- **The policy should also include guidelines to follow if a worker is suspected of being under the influence of alcohol and drugs.**

- **In most cases managers are instructed to report the situation to the Human Resources Department or a supervisor who has been specifically trained to handle alcohol and drug abuse situations.**

- **The best way to deal with a potential substance abuser is to "catch" them before they have a problem.**
 - So your company should hold regular education sessions for all employees and managers.

- **Topics that should be covered include:**
 - The effects of alcohol and drugs on health, safety and personal life.
 - The impact substance abuse has on work performance.
 - Recognizing the signs of alcoholism and drug addiction.
 - How to report substance abuse in the workplace.
 - Resources that are available to help employees overcome alcohol and drug problems.

- **Each session should include an in-depth review of your company's drug and alcohol policy, to make certain that employees understand the rules they must follow.**
 - If the company conducts alcohol and drug testing, workers should be told why the testing is necessary and what it will entail.

- **Many employees feel that testing violates their right of privacy and questions their character.**
 - Since your workers may have these misgivings, it's important that they realize the testing is to help eliminate substance abuse and keep everyone safe, healthy and productive.

- **There are five types of substance abuse tests that are typically given:**
 - "Pre-employment" tests are used to screen out illegal drug users before they are hired.
 - "Reasonable suspicion" tests are given when there are indications that a worker is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
 - "Post-accident" tests are used to determine if substance use may have contributed to a mishap.
 - "Return-to-duty" tests verify that workers who have been removed from "safety sensitive jobs" due to substance abuse are on the road to recovery and can safely resume their normal job functions.
 - "Random" tests, which are given without notice and by "luck of the draw," ensure that workers are not violating the company's drug and alcohol policy.

- **Drug and alcohol testing can help to prevent substance abuse by making workers think twice about taking illegal drugs, or using alcohol on the job.**
 - But remember, testing is not infallible.
 - A worker could be a substance abuser and still pass a test.

- **There are many types of drugs, and only a few can be tested for at one time.**
 - Alcohol and some other drugs also pass through the body quickly.
 - They can only be detected a few hours after they were last used.

- **And there is always the possibility that a substance abuser has "doctored" their sample, to make it appear as though they are "clean."**

- **One of the most effective ways to detect substance abuse is to look for anything unusual in a persons' behavior.**
 - Anyone who is "under the influence" can be a safety hazard.
 - So in addition to your own workers you should pay attention to customers and venders, as well as other supervisors and their workers.

- **The way a substance abuser acts will depend largely on the type of drug that they take.**
 - Depressants, such as alcohol, marijuana and tranquilizers, slow down brain activity, making a person sluggish.
 - Stimulants, including methamphetamine, cocaine and crack "stir up" the brain, causing a person to become abnormally active.
 - Narcotic analgesics, such as heroin, morphine and OxyContin numb the senses, rendering a person virtually impervious to pain.
 - Hallucinogens like LSD alter how the brain processes information, causing a person to see, hear, taste and feel things that aren't really there.

- **Drug use can also result in extreme mood swings.**
 - For instance when someone is high on cocaine they may be giddy, energetic and extroverted.
 - Once the effects wear off, they can rapidly come "down", and can be angry, depressed and withdrawn.

- **The amount of a substance that a person uses, and the way that their body reacts to it, will also influence how they behave. For example:**
- **A single glass of wine tends to relax most people and make them more "sociable."**
 - But everyone reacts differently when they drink too much.
 - Some people fall asleep.
 - Others become the "life of the party."
 - There are also drinkers who get anxious, depressed, aggressive, angry or even violent.
- **If you do notice a worker behaving oddly, you should look for other, more "concrete" signs of substance abuse.**
- **Alcohol is by far the most commonly abused substance, both on and off the job.**
 - Workers who are drinking on the job will often try to conceal alcohol by hiding it in their thermoses, or mixing it with coffee, juice or other beverages.
- **Marijuana, on the other hand, is the most frequently abused illegal substance.**
- **It is usually smoked in either small pipes or rolled into "joints," which you may see in an abuser's work area.**
 - Pot smoke is also very pungent, and its odor can linger on a worker's clothing for hours.
- **Bloodshot eyes are a common side effect of marijuana use as well.**
 - You might see an abuser wearing sunglasses to try and hide the fact that they have been getting "high."
- **In recent years, tranquilizers, codeine, OxyContin and many other prescription drugs have also become common substances to abuse.**
 - Many of these medications are chemically similar to heroin and other illegal drugs, making them just as addictive and deadly.

- **Medical privacy laws often prevent you from questioning a worker on their medication use.**
 - However if an employee drives company vehicles, operates machinery or performs other tasks that require them to be completely alert, you can insist that they tell you if they are taking medications that may cause "drowsiness" or other impairment.

- **Some workers even abuse solvents, gasoline, glue and other chemicals that they work with by purposely inhaling the fumes.**
 - So you should talk to any employee who appears to be sniffing these materials.
 - It's your job to ensure that workers who handle these substances are wearing the proper respiratory protection!

- **At some point in your career you are likely to supervise an employee who appears to have a substance abuse problem.**

- **Remember, unusual behaviour doesn't necessarily mean that a worker is drinking, or using drugs.**
 - Everyone has "bad days."
 - A person may also be acting abnormally due to a medical condition or some other problem.
 - So don't jump to conclusions.
 - And never try to handle the situation alone.

- **If you do believe that a worker may have a substance abuse problem, consult your company's drug and alcohol policy to find out what actions to take.**
 - The policy will most likely direct you to first report the situation to a substance abuse expert within your company.
 - They will work with you regarding the "next steps" to take.

- **Never accuse an employee of substance abuse. It's not your job to:**
 - Be a police officer.
 - Diagnose a worker's substance abuse problem.
 - Act as their therapist.
 - Your responsibility is to insure that your employees are performing their jobs safely and affectively.

- **There are no "generic" ways to handle a worker who has a possible alcohol or drug problem.**
 - The employee's apparent level of impairment, their job functions and the potential for them having a serious accident are some of the factors that dictate how the situation must be dealt with.

- **One of the best approaches is to focus on a suspected alcohol or drug abuser's performance.**
 - Substance abusers usually have a lot of difficulty functioning on the job.

- **By keeping written performance reports and safety records for all of your workers you will be prepared to deal with anyone's performance or safety issues, regardless of the cause.**

- **Always stick to the facts when making notes about a worker's performance.**
 - If an office worker seems to continually struggle with their work after they return from lunch, you should record each incident and the date.
 - If you smell alcohol on their breath you can jot that down, but you generally don't want to indicate that they were "drunk."
 - Just list the facts, the date and the time, without drawing conclusions.

- **It may take weeks of "incident reports" before you can establish a pattern of poor performance that justifies confronting a worker, but immediate intervention is needed any time an employee's actions could endanger themselves or others.**
 - For example, workers who drive vehicles or operate machinery should not be permitted to perform these tasks if they appear to be "under the influence."
- **If it is determined that a worker does have an alcohol or drug problem, they will usually be required to enter a rehabilitation program.**
 - This can be with an outside group or agency, or through the company's EAP program, if one exists.
- **Remember, your company's objective is to eliminate substance abuse...not people.**
 - And they will do whatever they can to help an employee's rehabilitation efforts.

*** * * SUMMARY * * ***

- **An employee's alcohol or drug problem can devastate your workplace, but there is a lot that you can do to keep substance abuse at bay.**
- **Know what you have to do to comply with laws and regulations that require workplaces to be drug and alcohol-free.**
- **Understand how the Americans with Disabilities Act applies to substance abusers.**
- **Make sure that all employees have a written copy of your company's drug and alcohol policy.**
- **See that all of your employees participate in substance abuse prevention education.**

- **Know the "signs" of alcohol and drug use.**
- **Keep detailed performance and safety records for each of your employees.**
- **Consult your company's drug and alcohol policy if you suspect that a worker may have a substance abuse problem.**
- **And intervene immediately if an employee's actions create a dangerous situation.**
- **As a manager you can help prevent substance abuse by letting your employees know that you expect them to be sober and drug-free... so that they can work safely and productively!**