

A guide for implementing a drug and alcohol policy in the workplace

The goal for developing a drug and alcohol policy in the workplace is to prevent and reduce harm associated with people being impaired by drugs or alcohol at work, by adopting strategies that assist in increasing education, awareness of on site consumption rules, enforcement for breaches of policy and treatment strategies. The development of a drug and alcohol policy should be included with the occupational health, safety and welfare policies as the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1983 clearly sets out that employers must ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees. While this duty of care is obligatory for employers it also enforces the concept that employees must also ensure the safety of fellow employees. Breaches of the Act for both employers and employees can incur heavy penalties. By including a drug and alcohol policy as part of the occupational health and safety focus, strategies that are related to the misuse or abuse of alcohol and other drugs can be developed in accordance with other risk assessment and control principles.

What are the aims of a workplace drug and alcohol policy?

The primary aim of the policy is to provide a clear documented guide regarding the workplace's stance on drug and alcohol issues in relation to the workplace and define the role of employees, supervisors and management in dealing with alcohol related work issues.

The policy should also aim to:

- Maintain and/or restore the good health and welfare of employees
- Ensure a safe working environment
- Promote low level/low risk drug and alcohol use specifically in relation to the workplace
- Reduce levels of drug and alcohol related costs including absenteeism, low productivity and accidents
- To provide information about referral to counselling, treatment and rehabilitation services.

Who is covered by the policy?

- **ALL** persons employed by this company are covered by the policy

What is included in the policy?

1. Consumption guidelines

- Alcohol and illicit drugs shall not be consumed on company premises, in company cars, or in any time as paid employees of the company. An exception will be made on designated 'special occasions' e.g. Christmas Eve where low alcohol drinks may be consumed but no machinery must be in operation at the time.
- Employees taking prescription drugs that are not recommended to be taken whilst driving a car or operating machinery should notify their supervisor.

- No alcohol should be consumed prior to commencing duty, particularly if required to drive a vehicle or operate machinery.

2. Education

- All staff members (including new employees) will be provided with education about the effects of drugs and alcohol prior to policy implementation, and on an ongoing basis. Staff will also receive information about the drug and alcohol policy when developed.

3. Problem identification

- Problems may be identified through:
 - ➔ self identification
 - ➔ self referral to a treatment program
 - ➔ another employee
 - ➔ by the supervisor

It is important to note that a supervisor's identification of an alcohol related issue with an employee in the workplace, should be done so in relation to reduced work performance.

- All identifications will be strictly confidential and will not be cause for employment discrimination in the future.

4. Workplace Assessment

All employees have a responsibility to identify conditions in their work environment that contribute to drug and alcohol problems. If an alcohol issue is noted in the workplace then normal occupational health and safety procedures should follow.

5. Treatment Services

Information about treatment agencies can be found in the Policy Handbook and in the information provided in the orientation folder. Employees should see their supervisor for treatment arrangements.

6. Function Guidelines

Efforts should be made to ensure that alcohol served at work related functions is responsibly served. This is important as alcohol related injuries that occur as a result of work functions can be considered the responsibility of employers.

7. Procedures for breach of policy and grievances

- Non-compliance with the drug and alcohol policy will be viewed as a serious matter and treated in the same way as any breach of company policy.
- Any individual who is adversely affected by alcohol or another drug will not be allowed to work until they are fit to do so. Suitable transport will be arranged to the person's home at the expense of the company. If an employee affected by alcohol or other drugs are sent home to recover, they will not be paid for the lost time. Disciplinary action may be taken on return to work.
- Any grievance will be dealt with in the same manner as other policy grievances.

7. Policy review

- This policy will be reviewed in 12 months. Any changes and adjustments will be made accordingly.

How to develop a drug and alcohol policy for the workplace

1. **Gather Information** - about the problem and how it relates to your workplace. This could relate to things like accidents and absenteeism, low productivity or the use of alcohol as part of the workplace "scene".
2. **Raise awareness** of the issues - You could do this by displaying posters or distributing pamphlets, or holding a brief information session for staff.
3. **Ask** for interested persons to be involved in helping develop a policy for drugs and alcohol.
4. **Draft** a written policy – An effective policy should:
 - contain a clear statement of your organisation's commitment to a Drug and Alcohol free workplace
 - contain a clear statement of the behaviour expected of employees and apply equally to all personnel
 - form part of your organisation's overall health and safety program
 - address issues in the work environment that increase the use of drugs and alcohol
 - provide an atmosphere of support for problems, and be as non punitive as possible
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5. **Circulate** the draft policy to all employees for comment. **Finalise** the policy and set a date for its introduction.
6. **Inform** all employees of the policy. Include details of the policy in orientation for new staff.
7. **Set** a date for **review** of the policy - e.g. 12 months after implementation date.

Sample policy statement

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1983 *Company X* has an obligation to provide a safe working environment for all employees. The rights of individuals to drink and take drugs socially is acknowledged, but when work performance suffers or individuals are endangered, then some action must be taken. Employees should not be adversely affected by alcohol or drug use during working hours and must at all times carry out their duties and responsibilities in a safe manner.

The Company supports good management practice and will achieve this by implementing a Drug and Alcohol policy, which will provide: -

- Education and Information
- Organisational support
- Support for prevention by enabling access to treatment and rehabilitation services
- Assessment of the work environment to identify conditions which may contribute to drug and alcohol problems

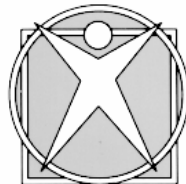
Company X is committed to the concepts of PREVENTION, COUNSELLING AND REHABILITATION. This is reflected in the following policy, which has been endorsed by both company management and employees.

For further information on the development of a workplace drug and alcohol policy please contact:

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*Hunter Centre for Health Advancement 2000
for the
Healthy Hunter Workplaces Project*

This document was adapted from the Premier's department of NSW Alcohol and other drugs policy and guidelines August 1998 as well as WorkCover's Drugs, alcohol and the workplace - A Guide to developing a workplace drug and alcohol policy, 1995.