

Workplace Alcohol or Drug Use

A Guide for Managers and Supervisors

If a staff member's behavior indicates that they may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while at work or while working from home, it is important to take action.

1. Gather facts. A person who is under the influence may show signs of impairment, such as:

- ▶ Smell of alcohol or marijuana
- ▶ Sleepiness or lethargy
- ▶ Confusion or disorientation
- ▶ Slurred speech
- ▶ Bloodshot/glassy eyes or fixed/dilated pupils
- ▶ Flushed, sweaty, or disheveled appearance
- ▶ Aggressive or combative demeanor
- ▶ Difficulty walking or poor coordination
- ▶ Disregard for safety procedures

Even if drugs or alcohol are no longer in an individual's bloodstream, their behavior may still be affected.

For instance, the person may have a headache or impaired coordination due to a hangover or cold-like symptoms from narcotic withdrawal.

2. Document behaviors and ask another manager to corroborate your findings (if possible). Track your observations based on the frequency and duration of events. Make a note of any patterns, such as being late on Mondays. Consult with Human Resources before taking any further steps, especially if your organization has "for cause" drug testing.

3. Schedule a private meeting with the person.

Use clear, objective language when sharing your concerns. A good way to start is to say, "I have noticed (list behaviors) and I am concerned about your wellbeing and safety."

4. Avoid labeling the person's behavior. Comments like "I think you have a problem with alcohol or drugs" may have legal implications for your organization. Focus on factual observations.

5. Listen. If the person becomes angry or says things like "You think I'm an addict," don't engage. Instead, reiterate that your concern is related to work performance and conduct. Stay calm and maintain an even tone of voice.

6. Consult with Human Resources to determine next steps. Your options may include:

- ▶ Requesting a "for cause" drug test
- ▶ Sending the person home (the organization must provide transportation if the person seems impaired)
- ▶ Making a performance referral to LifeMatters

Confronting a staff member about alcohol or drug use protects not just the individual worker, but the safety of the workplace as a whole. It may also be a difficult or emotional experience, especially if your life or family has been impacted by addiction issues in the past. The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can support you throughout the process. Call 24/7/365.

Call the **LifeMatters®** Management Consultation Service toll-free anytime. **1-800-634-6433**

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