



Alcohol and Other Drugs at Work: A Guide for Managers

Alcohol and drug use, whether on the job or not, has a significant impact on the workplace. Common ways you might see its impact on your team include:

- Use of alcohol, marijuana, or illicit drugs while working, either on site or from home
- Behavior or performance that is impaired by legal prescription medications taken to manage pain or health conditions
- Individuals feeling sick or “hung over” while on duty

Often, a person who is struggling with substance abuse will have a pattern of recognizable behavior. Signs to watch for include:

- Unexplained absences or excess sick leave
- Tardiness or leaving work early
- Taking longer or more frequent breaks
- Financial issues or asking for pay advances
- Missed deadlines, errors, incomplete work, or making poor decisions
- Complaints from customers about inappropriate or ineffective interactions
- Strained relationships with co-workers (including avoiding or isolating from others)

- Poor memory or lack of attention to detail
- Sudden or unusual changes in behavior
- Belligerent or argumentative behavior

If you notice someone engaging in any of these behaviors, do not assume it is due to substance abuse. Instead, document the behavior and address any performance concerns.

Both HR and LifeMatters can help you prepare to meet with someone whose performance may be deteriorating due to alcohol or other drug use. You may encounter one or more of the following reactions:

- Rationalizing the drop in performance by blaming it on stress or long hours
- Denial, such as saying that others are out to get them
- Anger or other defensive responses, such as saying “it’s none of your business”

Dealing with an alcohol or other drug use concern may be personally stressful. It may also have an impact on your team, especially if one or more team members are personal friends with the individual engaging in substance abuse. The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can help you cope with your own reaction and suggest ways to manage team dynamics. Call anytime.

1-800-634-6433

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