

# Workplace Alcohol or Drug Use

## A Guide for Managers and Supervisors

If a staff member's behavior indicates that she or he may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on the job, it's important to take action.

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

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

An individual's behavior may be affected even if drugs or alcohol are no longer in his or her bloodstream. 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.** Track your observations based on the frequency and duration of the events. Make a note of any patterns you observe and keep this documentation handy for when you meet with the individual. At this point, it is essential to consult with Human Resources, particularly if your company has "for cause" drug testing.

**3. Schedule a private meeting with the person and outline your concerns.** Use clear, objective language to state your observations. 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 company. Keep the focus on your factual observations.

**5. Listen.** The person may become angry or say things like "You think I'm a drunk." Don't engage; instead, reiterate that your focus is on work performance and conduct. Stay calm and maintain an even tone of voice.

**6. Consult with Human Resources to determine your next step.** Depending upon company policy, your options may include:

- ▶ Requesting a "for cause" drug test
- ▶ Sending the person home (if she or he seems impaired, it is imperative that the company provide transportation)
- ▶ Making a performance referral to LifeMatters

When confronting a staff member about alcohol or drug use, remember that your actions will help protect not just the individual worker, but the safety of the workplace as a whole.

LifeMatters is available to provide assistance with workplace substance abuse concerns. Call 24/7/365.

Call the **LifeMatters®** by Empathia Management Consultation Service toll-free anytime. **1-800-367-7474**

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