



# American Drug Testing

*Drug-Free Workplace Programs*

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## DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ADVISOR

AN ONGOING SERIES TO PROTECT YOUR COMPANY BY HELPING TO KEEP DRUGS OUT OF YOUR WORK-

### The Importance of a Drug-Free Workplace

Chances are pretty good that you have an employee with a substance abuse problem. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has found that almost 75 percent of adult illicit drug users are employed full- or part-time. Both NIDA and the federal Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recommend drug testing as part of a comprehensive program to create a drug-free workplace.

#### The Importance of a Drug-Free Workplace

Drug use in the workplace creates a significant financial burden on a business. Absenteeism, reduced performance outcomes, and accidents all come with clearly identifiable costs that can grow and have direct impact on other employees. The potential financial burden can make the cost of drug testing worthwhile. But testing alone is not enough.

Drug testing is more likely to be effective when combined with a clear company policy, employee education, supervisor

training on the signs of drug and alcohol abuse, and access to employee assistance services. A drug-free workplace

*“...Drug testing is more likely to be effective when combined with a clear company policy,”*

then becomes part of the company culture, not simply a one-time round of drug-testing. In many large companies that proudly describe themselves as drug-free workplace, pre-employment drug testing is often a standard practice. Using resources from SAMHSA, workers' compensation carriers, and health benefits carriers, employers of all sizes can implement a drug-free workplace policy.

#### Determining When Testing Is Warranted

The US Department of Transportation (DOT) regulates required drug testing in specific industries: aviation, trucking, railway, maritime, and mass transit. While other employers are not subject to federal mandates, there are a range of state laws from the provision of programs that include discounts on workers' compensation insurance for employers who maintain a drug-free workplace program to prohibitions on testing before a job offer.

Pre-employment screening is the most common workplace drug-testing method. Barring any state regulatory constraints, employers choose when and how to test pre-hire and can limit the process to specific positions. Whatever is decided, it is essential that it is applied consistently. A machine shop employer may decide to create a policy to test only those who will use mechanical equipment, excluding office and sales personnel, but should not later decide that, "Joe, the new lathe operator, can skip the drug test because his father works for the company." Testing all candidates after a job offer will be the best approach as part of a comprehensive drug-free workplace policy.



established criteria. A workers' comp carrier can help you identify these standards. When an employee reports to work under the influence or is spotted returning from break with dilated pupils and an unsteady gait, employers may then require testing for reasonable cause. The supervisor does not have to announce, "I think you are high." They can say, "You appear to be under the influence of an illegal substance and we are requiring that you submit to drug testing."

In all situations of post-employment drug testing, it is essential that managers are trained in the appropriate content of the conversation and employees are told when testing must be completed. It won't

make a lot of sense to send an employee home pending results of a drug screen and allow them to take a few days off before taking the test a week later. For additional information, see the "client area" at [www.AmericanDrugTesting.net](http://www.AmericanDrugTesting.net) or call 843-747-4111.



**The Drug-Free Workplace Advisor** is published by American Drug Testing, a leading drug-free

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