



# 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 WORKPLACE.

### Methamphetamine Epidemic & Employer Cost

Methamphetamine, also known as speed, meth and chalk, is a fast-growing illegal stimulant that has been tried by more than 12 million Americans, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. And its use in the workplace is soaring.



The number of positive drug tests for amphetamines grew by 6% last year, a mere fraction of the 44% increase in 2003, that was reported by Quest Diagnostics, a provider of employer drug-testing services. Officials at Quest say drug testing may be deterring drug users, which could be one reason for the slower rate of growth. The findings are based on more than 6 million workplace drug tests conducted in 2004. Meth is the most common type of amphetamine abused.

#### The Drug-Free Workplace Advisor is a resource of



Robert B. Dodenhoff  
President

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According to a 2003 report from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, about 1.3 million people reported using meth in the previous year, and 607,000 said they had used it in the previous month.

*"Methamphetamine can create a more violent behavior ... with anxiety and paranoia, and workplace violence is a major concern for employers,"*

"(Methamphetamine) is a big issue and an area of concern from employers," says Barry Sample, at Quest in Lyndhurst, N.J. "You can't necessarily tell (whether an employee is addicted). They need to feed this habit. They're going to have ill health effects. They're going to modify their behavior to obtain the drugs by any means."

#### Meth addiction costs employers

A recent study at the University of Arkansas found businesses in Benton County (population of about 170,000) were losing an estimated \$21 million annually because of meth. Costs were largely due to absenteeism and lost productivity.

Meth dealing and meth-related sales can also seep into the

workplace. In June, more than 200 law enforcement agents arrested 49 people at 16 companies associated with convenience stores. They were indicted on charges of knowingly selling products used to make meth. Those involved included employees and owners of convenience stores, a tobacco store, a grocery store and others, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Northern District of Georgia. Meth can be manufactured from common over-the-counter products.

"Methamphetamine can create a more violent behavior ... with anxiety and paranoia, and workplace vio-



lence is a major concern for employers," says Mark de Bernardo, executive director of the Institute for a Drug-Free Workplace in Washington.

David Parnell, an admitted meth abuser, 38, says he was teetering on the edge of violence when he used on the job. He worked for several years at a tire factory in Mayfield, Ky., and used meth regularly. Whenever the drug left him too burned-out to function, he would tell

a doctor he felt depressed and get medical leave.

"They knew I was on something, but they couldn't catch me," Parnell says. "The more money I made, the more I used. People can hide this in the beginning, in the early stages."

Source: USA Today

#### Use of Synthetic Painkillers (Oxycontin®) Triples

A new report by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University found that between 1992 and 2003 prescription drug abuse tripled among people aged 12-17 and nearly doubled among adults, trumping illicit drugs such as cocaine, hallucinogens, inhalants and heroin. Researchers said the increase is due largely to the ease of accessibility through the Internet and household medicine cabinets, and a perception that prescription drugs are safe even when abused. For coalitions, the findings illustrate the need to take a



closer look at the problem in local communities and determine a community-wide prevention strategies should be initiated.

Source: CASA