

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: Nightmare in the Workplace, Part I

Methamphetamine use has traditionally been associated with white, rural blue-collar workers who are predominantly male, their ages in the 20s or 30s. Workers may use methamphetamine in an attempt to be more productive since productivity in the workplace is greatly valued. They are tricked or lured into believing that meth reduces stress by increasing their performance, concentration and productivity by giving them energy to take on additional work shifts or to work for longer hours without the need to rest – enabling one to meet a deadline, for instance. And, indeed, a worker can become “super productive” when he or she first takes the substance. But, the worker who uses methamphetamine will never reach that kind of productivity again due to the nature of how the substance affects the brain. While drug testing appears to be hindering methamphetamine use in the workplace, the substance is, nevertheless, still taken at many worksites. Those workers who use meth at the worksite are most often low intensity users and will take

meth orally, mixed with a drink, or snorted, to provide a burst of energy to finish a task. This method of ingestion makes it easier for a user to take the substance at work without getting caught or giv-

“... This method of ingestion makes it easier for a user to take the substance at work without getting caught.”

ing too many signs of using at work. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) suggests that some groups, such as truck drivers, athletes and restaurant, construction, factory, mining and white-collar workers may be especially susceptible to the illusion that using meth is beneficial. Some of these industries, especially construction, manufacturing and mining, may be partially explained by the fact that they employ high concentrations of males in their 20s and 30s. In these particular industries, long hours, fatigue and productiveness all play a role in job success and create temptation to turn to drugs such as meth.

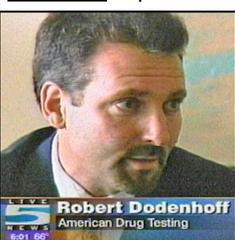
Signs and Symptoms of Use

by Employees:

While it is not the role of the employer, supervisor or manager to diagnose substance use, abuse or addiction, it is helpful to understand some of the signs and symptoms of methamphetamine use (see sidebar on right of page). It is important to remember that if an employee displays signs and symptoms of meth use, it does not necessarily mean there is a meth problem. For example, when a worker is high on methamphetamine, that person can initially be very productive, focused and quite efficient in his or her job performance. However, this phase of productivity does not continue. Researchers found that an inability to ignore distraction or to focus on a task is another possible indication of methamphetamine use. Meth users burn out quickly and are unable to hold down a job. Another indication of a substance problem is an applicant with a history of many short-lived jobs. When considering a new hire, pay attention to the candidate’s job history and consider a background check and pre-screening with drug testing. Certain other behavior may be indicative of methamphetamine use. Of particular concern with a methamphetamine user is the time when that person begins to come down from the high, known as the tweaking phase. It can cause feelings of anxiety and emptiness, resulting in extreme irritability and paranoia. There may be unpredictable and dangerous behavior exhibited when or if

the person is startled, confused or confronted. For additional tips, see the “client

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