

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Describe the effect alcohol and drug abuse has on a job

Objectives:

- A. Explain the effect of drug and alcohol abuse has on a person while they work.
- B. Discuss the cost drug and alcohol abuse has on businesses.
- C. Discuss the solution to workplace substance abuse.
- D. Discuss workplace Drug and Alcohol policies and testing programs.

MODULE 5D: INFORMATION SHEET

TO THE STUDENT: Read and study this information sheet and complete the student activity at the end.

Unsafe Behavior

What you put into your body can also lead to unsafe behavior on the job. Using alcohol or drugs such as tranquilizers, marijuana, or amphetamines can create any or all of the attitude and behavior problems, which could create this situation. Some people feel they can “handle” their liquor or drugs. The true fact is alcohol and drugs, even in a relatively small amount, affect people’s judgment.

Drugs and alcohol slow down reflexes and increase reaction time. They affect sense of balance and reduce ability to concentrate. A worker under the influence of drugs who is slipping from a ladder may not be able to react quickly enough to avoid the fall. Drugs and alcohol make workers less alert, more apt to fall asleep or to misjudge what they are doing. Some experts say that people who have been drinking cause 40 percent of all industrial accidents.

If an accident occurs, a person who has been drinking may have trouble escaping from the dangerous situation. She or he may not be able to think clearly and may be unable to get help. What might have been a simple injury can become more serious.

Common medications also create hazards. Cold and hay fever medications often contain substances that can make the user sleepy or less alert. The labels on these products warn people against driving or using heavy machinery while using the drug. If a person drinks alcohol while taking a cold remedy, the effects of the drug will be even stronger.

Cost to American Businesses

Today in the United States, 73 percent of drug users are employed, costing American businesses billions of dollars annually in lost productivity and health care costs. Due to higher employment rates and rising substance abuse, the chances that your organization employs one of these 8.1 million workers is greater today than it has been in the past several years. Studies reveal that employees who abuse drugs have a tremendously harmful effect on the workplace—they are more likely to have extended absences from work, show up late, be involved in workplace accidents, and file workers' compensation claims.

More and more employers have established substance abuse programs to respond to the problems created by drugs and alcohol in the workplace. These programs save organizations money, and in some cases, they save careers, families and lives. In an effort to raise awareness about the impact of substance abuse in the workplace, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) implemented Working Partners for an Alcohol- and Drug-Free American Workplace. This educational program helps employers develop and maintain an alcohol- and drug-free workplace.

As part of the Federal government's effort to address the issue of substance abuse in the workplace, the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 was enacted as part of the series of drug legislation. This Act—in effect since March 18, 1989—requires contractors and grantees of Federal agencies to agree to provide drug-free workplaces as a precondition of receiving a contract or grant from a Federal agency.

The Effect of Drug and Alcohol abuse on the Work Place

The economic and human costs of drug and alcohol use are astounding. In fact, the National Institutes of Health recently reported that alcohol and drug abuse cost the economy \$246 billion in 1992, the most recent year for which economic data are available. In addition, numerous studies, reports and surveys suggest that substance abuse is having a profoundly negative affect on the workplace in terms of decreased productivity and increased accidents, absenteeism, turnover, and medical costs. Following are notable statistics that highlight the impact of substance abuse on the workplace:

- In 1990, problems resulting from the use of alcohol and other drugs cost American businesses an estimated \$81.6 billion in lost productivity due to premature death (37 billion) and illness (44 billion); 86% of these combined costs were attributed to drinking

Benefits of a Drug/Alcohol-free Workplace

Despite recent news reports about the increased use of drugs, particularly among young people, we continue to be encouraged that workplace substance abuse is a problem for which a solution exists. When the issue is addressed by establishing comprehensive programs, which often include a policy, education and training, testing, and access to

treatment through Employee Assistance Programs or other resources, it is a "win-win" situation for both employers and employees. The following examples are illustrative:

- One small plumbing company in Washington, D.C., the Warner Corporation, saved \$385,000 in one year by establishing a drug-free workplace program that included EAP services. The company attributed the savings to a decrease in the number of accidents, which resulted in lower workers' compensation costs and lower vehicle insurance premiums. Warner now has a waiting list of top-flight mechanics wanting to work in its drug-free environment, saving the company \$20,000 a year on personnel advertising costs. Additionally, the proportion of apprentices completing a two-year training course has increased from 25 percent to 75 percent, resulting in annual savings of \$165,000.
- In 1984, CSX Transportation, a freight railroad company, implemented Operation Redblock, a response to widespread violations of Rule G, which prohibits the use and possession of alcohol and drugs. The program's 4000 volunteers are trained to confront substance abusers, and if appropriate, refer them to the company's EAP. Since 1990, less than one percent of the drug tests administered to safety-sensitive employees have been positive.
- After implementing a comprehensive drug-free workplace program in response to a workers' compensation discount law, W.W. Gay Mechanical Contractors in Florida saved \$100,000 on workers' compensation premiums in 1990, and also has experienced increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and fewer accidents.
- Only four years after implementing a workplace substance abuse program which included drug testing, Jerry Moland of Turfscape Landscape Care, Inc., in Chandler, AZ, says that his company is saving over \$50,000 a year due to increased productivity, fewer accidents, and less absenteeism and turnover.
- According to the American Management Association's annual Survey on Workplace Drug Testing and Drug Abuse Policies, workplace drug testing has increased by more than 1,200 percent since 1987. More than 81 percent of businesses surveyed in 1996 were conducting some form of applicant or employee drug testing. Likewise, the perceived effectiveness of drug testing, as assessed by human resources managers, has increased from 50 percent in 1987 to 90 percent in 1996.
- In 1995, the average annual cost of EAP services per eligible employee nationwide was \$26.59 for internal programs staffed by company employees and \$21.47 for external programs provided by an outside contractor, according to the Research Triangle Institute. These costs compare favorably to the expense of recruiting and training replacements for employees terminated due to substance abuse problems—about \$50,000 per employee at corporations such as IBM.
- The Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services conducted a follow-up survey of 668 substance abuse treatment residents one year after

completing treatment. Findings indicated that absenteeism decreased by 89 percent, tardiness by 92 percent and on-the-job injuries by 57 percent.

Statistics such as these suggest not only that workplace substance abuse is an issue all employers need to address, but also, that it is an issue that can be successfully prevented. Taking steps to raise awareness among employees about the impact of substance use on workplace performance, and offering the appropriate resources and/or assistance to employees in need, will not only improve worker safety and health, but also increase workplace productivity and market competitiveness.

Establishing Workplace Alcohol & Drug Policies and Testing Programs

Considering that 70 percent of all illegal drug users are employed either full- or part- time (source: Working Partners), more and more businesses in recent years have established workplace drug & alcohol policies and testing programs. These programs are designed to promote drug- and alcohol-free workplaces.

The impact of drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace is significant and may directly drive up company costs related to health care costs, absenteeism, sick leave, overtime pay, insurance claims and workers' compensation. In addition, there are indirect costs of drug & alcohol use in the workforce that can impact a company's productivity and profitability. These costs include:

- Personnel turnover,
- Use of managerial time diverted to administering, reporting incidents,
- Damage to equipment, and
- Decreased productivity.

Although these reasons may be compelling to establish a drug & alcohol policies and testing programs, careful precautions should be taken to ensure your program is legal and does not conflict with regulations by your state's department of labor or violate an employee's privacy rights. In some states, substance abuse testing and particularly, random drug testing is not allowed.

Because state laws vary and no one drug & alcohol testing program fits every employers' needs, the person responsible for establishing a plan should ensure that the policy complies with all applicable state and federal requirements. According to legal experts, it's also advisable to provide advanced notice of the drug & alcohol testing policy to employees, whether or not it is required by the state.

Federal and state drug/alcohol testing laws contain requirements that are aimed at guarding against inaccurate test results and protecting an employee's privacy.

MODULE 5D: STUDENT ACTIVITIES

TO THE STUDENT: After reading and studying the information sheet above, complete the following questions.

Answer the following questions.

1. Does the amount of alcohol or drugs a person has taken have any influence on whether it will affect their judgment?

Yes No

2. Drugs and alcohol affect an employee's _____.

3. Some experts say that people who have been drinking cause what percent of all industrial accidents? _____

4. Can common medications affect a workers judgment? Explain in a paragraph.

5. In the United States, what percent of drug users are employed? _____

6. Studies show that employees who abuse drugs have a tremendously harmful affect on the workplace. List four of these harmful affects.

7. What have employers done in response to the problems created by drug and alcohol in the workplace?

8. Drug and Alcohol programs save organizations _____.
9. Explain what the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 does.

10. The National Institute of Health recently reported that alcohol and drug abuse cost the economy how much in 1992?

11. Even though statistics show an increase in drug use should we continue to be encouraged that there is a solution?
Yes No
12. The Warner Company saved how much a year by establishing a drug-free workplace?

13. After implementing a comprehensive drug-free workplace program W. Gay Mechanical Contractors in Florida saved how much in workers' compensation premiums in 1990?

14. What percent of businesses surveyed in 1996 were conducting some form of applicant or employee drug testing?

15. Is it advisable to provide advance notice to employees of drug and alcohol testing?
Yes No

MODULE 5D: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Career Education and Work

13.3.11. Career Retention and Advancement

- A. Evaluate personal attitudes and work habits that support career retention and advancement.

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)

1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

1.5.11. Quality of Writing

- F. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
- Spell all words correctly.
 - Use capital letters correctly.
 - Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
 - Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
 - Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).