KPA

Substance Abuse in the Workplace

Your Reasonable
Suspicion Checklist

Substance Abuse Prevention in the Workplace

In any high-risk industry, substance abuse and work do not mix. Heavy machinery, hazardous chemicals, and essential safety protocols require workers to be clear-headed and focused on their tasks.

Focusing on substance abuse pays dividends. Within the construction industry, the Associated Builders and Contractors determined that "Robust substance abuse prevention programs/policies with provisions for drug and alcohol testing where permitted lead to a 70% reduction in TRIR and a 73% reduction in DART rates. Plus, substance abuse testing can be an effective method of incident prevention if used properly."[1]

What should employers do if they suspect an employee is under the influence of substances at work?

A solid place to start is to document your observations using a reasonable suspicion checklist. Here you can document physical and behavioral observations when there is a suspicion of drug or alcohol use.

According to SHRM, "Employers with a comprehensive drug testing policy as part of their drug-free workplace program often include reasonable suspicion testing ... Reasonable suspicion testing must be based on individualized suspicion of a particular employee, and employers need to document objective facts that would suggest to a reasonable person that the individual is under the influence in violation of company policy."[2]

Here are the key areas you should consider in your reasonable suspicion assessment:

Physical Observations + **Behavioral Observations** + **Action Plan**

1 https://www.abc.org/spr
2 https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/how-to-guides/pages/

Physical Observations

When documenting observations regarding an employee who may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, you must pay attention to physical indicators exhibited by the employee. Physical observations should cover the following:

Walking

- ○ Holding on
- ○ Unsteady
- ○ Falling
- ○ Stumbling
- ○ Staggering
- ○ Other
- ○ Unable to walk
- ○ Swaying

Standing

- ○ Swaying
- ○ Rigid
- ○ Dizziness
- ○ Feet wide apart
- ○ Staggering
- ○ Other
- ○ Unable to stand
- ○ Sagging at knees

Movements

- ○ Fumbling
- ○ Slow
- ○ Reduced reaction time
- ○ Tremors
- ○ Jerky
- ○ Normal
- ○ Not following tasks
- ○ Other
- ○ Nervous
- ○ Hyperactive
- ○ Diminished coordination

Eyes

- ○ Bloodshot
- ○ Glassy
- ○ Other
- ○ Watery
- ○ Closed
- ○ Droopy
- ○ Dilated / Constricted pupils

Face

- ○ Flushed
- ○ Other
- ○ Pale
- ○ Sweaty

Breath

- ○ No alcoholic odor
- ○ Chemical odor
- ○ Other
- ○ Faint alcoholic odor
- ○ Sweet / pungent tobacco odor
- ○ Alcoholic odor
- ○ Heavy use of breath spray

Speech

- ○ Whispering
- ○ Incoherent
- ○ Rambling
- ○ Other
- ○ Slurred
- ○ Slobbering
- ○ Mute
- ○ Shouting
- ○ Silent
- ○ Slow

Appearance

- ○ Neat
- ○ Dirty
- ○ Partially dressed
- ○ Burnt rope smell on clothes, hair, body
- ○ Unruly
- ○ Stains on clothing
- ○ Bodily excrement stains
- ○ Excessive sweating in cool area
- ○ Messy
- ○ Marijuana odor
- ○ Visible puncture marks or tracks
- ○ Other

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Behavioral Observations

If you suspect an employee is abusing a substance on the job, it is critical to document your observations of the employee's behavior. Documentation of behavioral observations should include:

Demeanor

- ○ Cooperative
- ○ Polite
- ○ Crying
- ○ Excited
- ○ Overreacts to minor things
- ○ Other
- ○ Calm
- ○ Sarcastic
- ○ Sleeping on the job
- ○ Withdrawn
- ○ Excessive laughter
- ○ Talkative/ Rapid speech
- ○ Sleepy
- ○ Argumentative
- ○ Mood swings
- ○ Forgetful

Actions

- ○ Hostile
- ○ Drowsy
- ○ Hyperactive
- ○ Paranoid
- ○ Other
- ○ Fighting
- ○ Threatening
- ○ Calm
- ○ Possessing, using or distributing an illegal substance
- ○ Profanity
- ○ Erratic
- ○ Resisting communication
- ○ Baseless panic

Appetite

- ○ Always munching on something
- ○ Popping mints often
- ○ Constantly chewing gum
- ○ Other
- ○ Frequently eating candy

Miscellaneous

- ○ Presences of alcohol and / or drugs in employee's possession or vicinity
- ○ On the job misconduct by employee
- ○ Employee admission to alcohol and / or drug use or posession

Action Plan

Perhaps the action plan is the most important aspect of a Reasonable Suspicion Checklist.

This plan may include ongoing HR conversations, check-ins with the employee, and accountability measures such as training and drug testing. This action plan is crucial because it determines what needs to happen for the employee in question to remain in good standing with your facility.

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KPA EHS Tools for a Substance-Free Workplace

About KPA

KPA provides Environment, Health, and Safety (EHS) software, consulting, and award-winning online training to help organizations stay compliant with state and federal regulations and maintain a safe and productive workplace. The KPA EHS software platform is easy to use, highly configurable, and designed for a mobile workforce, which encourages broad adoption and an improved culture of safety across the organization.

For more information
visit **www.kpa.io** *or call* **866.356.1735.**

KPA Substance Abuse Training

KPA's Reasonable Suspicion safety training covers the importance of having a drug and alcohol awareness program, implementing reasonable suspicion procedures, and more. This training is included in the KPA Training Library, which offers hundreds of award-winning training courses designed to help employees improve their performance on the job. Starting with a solid core of EHS and HR training, companies then layer on industry-specific training packages to fully cover their areas of risk. To reinforce employee comprehension and support different employee learning styles, these training packages are supported by on-site training and a strong technology foundation.

Document Library

Go paperless with your policies. Share an unlimited library of PDF, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, videos, and documents with team members both in house and in the field.