



Official Newsletter of Drug Free Workplaces
April 2025 Vol. 26 No. 4

Published by The Council on Alcohol and Drugs
Tel (404) 223-2486 | Fax (866) 786-9811 | www.LiveDrugFree.org

Know what to do if someone you love has a drug problem? Realize that no one is immune to drugs. Learn the signs of drug use.

www.LiveDrugFree.org

DrugFree@WorkPlace

Are Workplace Drug Tests Reliable?

Drug testing is used by employers to try to control illegal drug use in the workplace. The reason for this is to ensure a good and safe working environment and avoid employee addiction problems and accidents. Drug testing is particularly important in work sectors where the risk of accidents is high.

Some employees may believe that recreational drug use is harmless, and that illegal drug use outside of work is a private matter, but employers know that workplace impairment can pose serious safety risks, especially in industries that require precision and alertness.

Drug users always deny their use of illegal drugs, but recent data reported in prior newsletters indicate that the use of controlled substances is increasing in working life. This is why many employers have implemented drug free workplace programs that include drug testing.

However—while workplace drug testing is known to be valuable, and necessary—considering the consequences of testing positive for drugs (suspension or

job termination) employees want to be assured that testing is reliable, accurate, and carried out in a correct and legally sound manner.

Drug Test Confirmations

Employees need to understand that since a positive drug test can have serious negative consequences for both the person being tested *and the employer*, businesses always want to try to minimize the risk of errors. Therefore, companies never rely solely on preliminary results from onsite rapid screening methods (like onsite urine tests, or oral fluid tests). All preliminary positive test results must be confirmed by HHS or CAP certified confirmation laboratories.

Certified confirmation labs use a process known as Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry (GC/MS) to confirm if a drug test is actually positive or not. Firmly established methods of drug testing like GC/MS are considered reliable because of years of scientific validation. Enough government and private studies have been published over the years with sufficiently consistent results to prove that drug testing, when performed properly, is a valid method of determining employee drug use.

Medical Review Officers

Many companies also have an MRO (Medical Review Officer) assess all positive test results to rule out accepted alternative explanations rather than illegal drug use.

A Medical Review Officer is a licensed physician who is responsible for receiving and reviewing an employer's laboratory drug test results and evaluating medical explanations for positive drug test results.

The MRO acts as an independent and impartial "gatekeeper" and advocates for the accuracy and integrity of the drug testing process. They provide quality assurance reviews of the drug testing process for the specimens under their review, determine if there is a legitimate medical explanation for laboratory confirmed positives, adulterated, substituted and invalid drug test results, ensure the timely flow of test results and other information to employers, and protect the confidentiality of the drug testing information.

When a drug test is judged by the MRO as being positive due to the use of a legitimate medical prescription, the doctor will report the test as negative to the employer and no action will be taken against the employee. This is important, because while on average 70% of all positive drug tests are verified by an MRO as

due to illegal drug use, 30% are attributed to medical prescriptions.

Drug tests at work that are confirmed by a certified laboratory and reviewed by the MRO are beneficial for both the employers, who aim to prevent associated problems and costs, and for employees, who may wish to clear up unjustified suspicions against them.

Conclusion

Drug testing, a standard procedure in many workplaces across the U.S., is one of the most straightforward and effective ways companies prioritize the safety and wellness of their staff members. Drug testing is reliable, beneficial, and legally justified as a method of preventing employees from seriously harming themselves or others due to being impaired at work.

However, while requiring employee drug testing does provide many benefits to employers, companies must also have policies in place that protect employee rights, and support accountability, recovery, and self-identification during work activities. From health and safety benefits to productivity, it is financially and legally beneficial for businesses to have a comprehensive, fair, and equitable drug free workplace program in place.



Tell us about your experience!

Scan the QR code with your phone camera to share your thoughts, suggestions, and experiences about our newsletters. Your feedback helps us improve. We appreciate you for being part of our journey!

