

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland at College Park

New Report Describes Strategies to Reduce Workplace Substance Abuse

“Each year, substance abuse costs businesses an estimated \$100 billion in increased absenteeism, accidents, medical liability and health care costs” (p. 2), according to a new report by Drug Strategies. The report describes various strategies for addressing substance abuse problems among employees. For example, “employee benefits . . . constitute a major tool employers can use to reduce and manage employee substance abuse” (p. 4). A majority of businesses offer health insurance to their employees. While having insurance does not guarantee access to substance abuse treatment, many states require private insurance plans to provide some coverage for alcohol- and/or drug-related treatment. However, the report stresses that merely providing access to treatment is not enough. Employers should pursue a comprehensive drug-free workplace program that includes treatment as well as other methods of reducing substance abuse, including:

- Drug testing, which “works as both a deterrent and a means of early detection and referral for services” (p. 4).
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which can be crucial in identifying and providing intervention for employee substance abuse problems. “Good EAPs familiarize employees and supervisors with the warning signs of addiction and the resources available, facilitating both self-referral and managerial referral into assessment, treatment and follow-up services” (p. 4).
- Last-chance agreements, which “are offered after one or more warnings about drug- or alcohol-related job deficiencies, and require employees to enter rehabilitation and remain substance-free or face termination” (p. 5).

Additional information about establishing a comprehensive drug-free workplace program can be obtained from the National Drugs Don't Work Partnership at 703-706-0578, or the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) Workplace Hotline at 1-800-WORKPLACE.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from *Investing in the Workplace: How Business and Labor Address Substance Abuse*, Drug Strategies, Washington, D.C., 1996. For more information, please contact Drug Strategies at 202-663-6090.

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