NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

**Drugs and the Workplace**

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Drug use, abuse, or addiction among employees and their family members can cause expensive problems for business and industry, ranging from lost productivity, absenteeism, injuries, fatalities, theft and low employee morale, to an increase in health care, legal liabilities and workers' compensation costs.

In addition, drug abuse can cause problems at work including:

- After-effects of substance use (withdrawal) affecting job performance
- Preoccupation with obtaining and using substances while at work, interfering with attention and concentration
- Illegal activities at work including selling illegal drugs to other employees
- Psychological or stress-related effects due to drug use by a **family member**, friend or co-worker that affects another person's job performance

**Estimated Costs:** Drug abuse costs employers $81 billion annually.

**FACT:** Workers who report having three or more jobs in the previous five years are about twice as likely to be current or past year users of illegal drugs as those who have had two or fewer jobs. NCADD Fact Sheet: Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Workplace.

**FACT:** 70% of the estimated 14.8 million Americans who use illegal drugs are employed.

According to NCADD Affiliates that provide Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services, the following job performance and workplace behaviors may be signs that indicate possible workplace drug problems:

**Job Performance**

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Inconsistent work quality
- Poor concentration and lack of focus
- Lowered productivity or erratic work patterns
- Increased absenteeism or on the job “presenteeism”
- Unexplained disappearances from the jobsite
- Carelessness, mistakes or errors in judgment
- Needless risk taking
- Disregard for safety for self and others- on the job and off the job accidents
- Extended lunch periods and early departures

**Workplace Behavior**

- Frequent financial problems
- Avoidance of friends and colleagues
- Blaming others for own problems and shortcomings
- Complaints about problems at home
- Deterioration in personal appearance or personal hygiene
- Complaints, excuses and time off for vaguely defined illnesses or family problems

Marijuana is the most commonly used and abused illegal drug by employees, followed by cocaine, with prescription drug use steadily increasing (see “Prescription Drugs”).

**What Can Employers Do?  Establish an Employee Assistance Program**

Back in the late 1940’s-early 1950’s, NCADD found that the workplace was ideally suited to address alcoholism through a focus on employee job performance and access to treatment. NCADD founded the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) concept as a joint labor-management program.  NCADD wrote the first **EAP Manual** and the first **EAP Standards**. The earliest programs were called Occupational Alcoholism Programs, later included drug abuse, and evolved into what are now called, EAP’s.

Work can be an important place to address drug abuse issues and by establishing or promoting programs such as an EAP and a Drug-Free Workplace Program (DFWP), employers can help employees and their families through referrals to community resources and services.

Many individuals and families face a host of difficulties closely associated with drug use, and they bring these problems into the workplace, directly or indirectly. By supporting EAP and treatment, employers can dramatically assist in reducing the negative impact of drug use on the workplace.

- Employers with successful EAP's and DFWP's report improvements in morale and productivity and decreases in absenteeism, accidents, downtime, turnover, and theft.
- Employers with longstanding programs also report better health status among employees and family members and decreased use of medical benefits by these same groups.

For additional information: NCADD Fact Sheet: Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Workplace.

If you are concerned about your own use of alcohol or drugs, Get Help. If you are concerned about a member of your family or friend, For Family or Friends.

Or Find an Affiliate near you.