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Drug & Alcohol Policy & Testing Program

Drug and Alcohol (D&A) testing may be appropriate where the misuse of drugs (including legal drugs, other drugs and prohibited drugs) and alcohol poses a risk to other people in the workplace, or the general public.

This guideline outlines some of the key considerations for development of a Drug & Alcohol policy and testing program.

RELEVANT AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS

AS3547:2019—Breath alcohol testing devices for personal use

AS4760: 2019—Procedures for specimen collection and the detection and quantitation of drugs in oral fluid

AS / NZS 4308:2008—Procedures for specimen collection and the detection and quantitation of drugs of abuse in urine

DOCUMENTING A DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY

An organisations D&A Policy should be developed following a thorough assessment of the risks and hazards alcohol and drugs pose in the workplace. A well document D&A Policy should include the following:

- A statement about the aim and purpose of the Policy
- Clear definitions of what is / is not a 'legal drug' or 'prohibited drug'
- Who the policy applies to (e.g. workers, contractors and visitors)
- Clearly specify how the policy will be implemented and the consequences of non-compliance
- A clear statement about confidentiality and record keeping
- Define when the policy comes into effect, and how often it will be reviewed and updated
- Provision for employee assistance / rehabilitation programs
- Provision of AOD training, awareness and education

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING PROGRAM

To support a business D&A policy, it is strongly advised to document the testing protocols and parameters of the testing program. This means clearly defining:

- The frequency of drug and alcohol testing
- The methods of testing used
- The types of testing and when they apply
- The consequences of testing positive (e.g. disciplinary action, suspension, rehabilitative programs)
- The testing procedure and chain of custody for test samples
- Interpreting the results
- What happens after a positive test
- The return to work process (following a positive test)
- Education and training
- Consultation and communication



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WHAT TYPE OF TEST IS BEST?

In Australia, the options for collection method are oral (saliva sampling) or fluid (urine sampling).

There are well documented advantages and disadvantages to the different testing methods.

Whichever method your organisation selects, it is important that it is well documented in the D&A policy and procedures.

You may also adopt different testing methodologies, e.g. urine testing for pre-employment and pre-return to work testing and oral testing for random / onsite testing (as an example).

ORAL TESTING

Regarded as cheaper and less invasive however shorter detection window.

FLUID TESTING

Slightly more accurate and able to detect smaller amounts with a longer window of detection , however collection is required in a specialist drug van or at a testing clinic (onsite).

Regardless of the collection method, if lab testing is required to validate results, this will usually require 24-48 hours.

Blood testing can also be used, however this is not available for on-site testing.

WHEN TO UNDERTAKE TESTING?

The D&A Policy and testing program should outline what type of testing will be performed (blood tests, urine tests and saliva tests) and when. This might include:

Pre—employment: Where an employee is subject to D&A testing as part of the onboarding process / fitness for work testing.

Random testing: Unannounced on-site testing (this might be the whole crew, or a sample of employees on site on that day).

Annual testing: Some contractors (e.g. Haulage contractors operating under TruckSafe) have annual testing requirements.

For Cause testing: If the employer has reasonable suspicion that a worker is under the influence of D&A.

Post incident testing: Where any employees are testing following a serious on-site incident or road accident.

Pre-return to work testing: Where an employee who previously tested positive, must return a negative result before resuming work duties.

QUALIFICATIONS TO UNDERTAKE TESTING

It is a requirement for anyone collecting urine or oral fluid samples to meet Australian Standards and to be trained as a collector per AS/NZS4308:2008, AS4760:2019 and AS3547:2019.

There are a number of nationally accredited providers able to deliver the Drug and Alcohol testing course (HLTPAT005).

Refresher training is required every 2 years.

Whether you train select staff to undertake your drug and alcohol testing , or outsource this function and engage competent and qualified specialists is a business decision.

If you do decide to collect the samples yourselves, you will still need to contract a National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accredited laboratory to test or verify positive samples for confirmation.



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GUIDELINES FOR WORKPLACE FUNCTIONS & EVENTS

Another consideration for your drug and alcohol policy is the serving of alcohol at authorised functions.

It is important to recognise that there may be occasions where workers may consume alcohol at a work sponsored function or corporate events (e.g. Christmas Party).

When planning workplace functions and events where alcohol is to be provided, taking a risk management approach and minimising the risk of intoxication or alcohol related harm is advised.

To achieve this you might consider:

- Offering a variety and supply of non-alcoholic drinks
- Promote the D & A policy and Code of Conduct
- A rule that workers who have consumed alcohol will not return to the workplace
- Alcohol will only be served at offsite venues and servers of alcohol will be trained in the responsible service of alcohol
- Ensuring transport availability for workers to get home safely after events
- Nominating designated start and finish times for events.
- A nominated senior manager is responsible to ensure the function is conducted in compliance with these requirements
- A requirement for food to be served anywhere alcohol is served
- Service will be refused to any employee who is intoxicated.
- Alcohol service to conclude one hour before the function finishes.
- That where alcohol is to be served at a designated functions on a company depot or office, that this will be brought onsite on the day of the function and any remaining alcohol will be removed from the premises at the conclusion of the function.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

The drug and alcohol policy and testing program procedures should also consider prescription medication.

Some prescription medications can impair a persons ability and affect their fitness for work.

It is important that if any worker is taking medication that may affect their ability to safely operate a vehicle or machinery that they declare this to their employer. This is so that safe alternative duties can be arranged for a period of time.

Additionally, some prescription and over the counter medications (including some pain medications, allergy medications, antibiotics, antidepressants and cold and flu medications) contain some of the same active ingredients as illicit drugs and may show up on a drug test as a “false positive”.

Workers must declare if they are taking or have taken any medication prior to taking the drug test. If necessary, lab tests will be used to verify the results. Another advantage of urine screening is that lab testing of these samples can differentiate between ingredients in prescription medication and illicit substances and also whether they (medications) were taken in accordance with the dosing suggestions.