

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

AN EAP HANDBOOK FOR MANAGERS



INTERLOCK

HANDBOOK FOR MANAGERS
– SUBSTANCE ABUSE

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HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK



This handbook is designed to provide you with information on substance abuse and the impact on the workplace. This manual identifies strategies which will assist you in dealing with this issue in your role as manager or supervisor.

It can be used as a reference guide when you are confronted with an employee who may have a substance abuse problem, and also for increasing your general awareness of alcohol and drug issues in the workplace. The consequences of an impaired worker might include lowered productivity, increased absenteeism, and a higher risk of workplace accidents; therefore, the impact on the immediate work group, the overall organization and its customers could be substantial.

WHAT IS SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

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Substance abuse refers to harmful preoccupation with substances like alcohol or drugs. Excessive alcohol or drug use (can include legal drugs, illegal drugs, prescription) can lead to physical, psychological, economic, legal and social problems.

The signs of substance abuse are not always clear. Signs may include one or more of the following:

- Moodiness
- Confusion
- Poor judgement
- Decreased concentration
- Excessive sweating and red eyes
- Smell of alcohol

Risk factors for substance abuse include family history and a lack of sound coping skills.

In the 2004 Canadian Addiction Survey, 6.2% of Canadians reported heavy drinking at least once a week, and 25.5% at least once a month. About one in five Canadian workers drinks at some time in the workplace.

Forty-four and a half percent (44.5%) of Canadians reported using cannabis at least once in their lifetime, and 14.1% reported use during the past 12 months. Among past-year cannabis users, 34.1% reported failing to control their use and 32% report a strong desire to use.

Life-time cannabis use increases with higher education and income levels. There has been a trend of increasing rates of illicit drug use (cannabis, LSD, speed, heroin) in Canada over recent years.

IMPACT ON THE WORKPLACE



Substance abuse in the workplace setting is an issue that has implications for safety and productivity.

Individuals who misuse drugs and alcohol are more likely to take time off from work and have reduced productivity. Impaired employees can cause serious workplace accidents and threaten the safety of employees and customers.

Studies have shown that it is not only drinking at work that can cause problems, but also heavy drinking outside of work. A study of airline pilots found that even 14 hours after a night of heavy drinking, their blood alcohol levels indicated that they were still legally intoxicated. Being hung-over at work is associated with feeling sick at work, sleeping at work, conflict with co-workers, and having difficulty completing work-related tasks.

impaired employees can cause serious workplace accidents

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) reports that annual productivity losses in Canada due to alcohol abuse have been estimated at \$4.1 billion, and the total cost of substance abuse is estimated to be more than \$18.4 billion a year.

Signs of alcohol or drug abuse problems may show up in the workplace in many ways:

WORK PERFORMANCE ISSUES

- Decreased productivity
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Increased mistakes
- Increased workplace incidents

ABSENTEEISM

- Frequent absences
- Lateness
- Longer breaks

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR

- Increased confusion
- Frequent or significant mood changes
- Avoiding supervisor

PHYSICAL SIGNS:

- Flushed face
- Red or glazed eyes
- Excessive sweating
- Unkempt appearance

Employees with substance abuse problems are often reluctant to seek help because of denial, shame, and fear related to job loss. Obstacles include lack of support, social and workplace stigma, and employees' perceptions that supervisors lack the knowledge and ability to deal with substance abuse problems.

IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

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Substance abuse negatively affects many individuals and families. People with substance abuse problems can experience legal consequences, job loss, health problems, increased debt, and relationship problems. In Canada, almost 75% of people report that their life has been negatively impacted by substance abuse. Family members are almost always affected when a spouse or parent suffers from substance abuse problems.

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let the employee know that you have noticed changes in their behaviour at work

APPROACHING THE EMPLOYEE WHEN NOTICING SIGNS

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When you notice warning signs, approach the employee privately. Choose a quiet location where you will not be disturbed. Know the person you are dealing with and plan your approach accordingly.

Some employees will want you to “cut to the chase” while others will prefer that you ease into the discussion gradually. When the time is right, let the employee know that you have noticed changes in his or her behaviour at work. Give a few examples. Be factual, clear, and tactful.

Ask a few open-ended questions and then stop talking. Remain quiet and allow time for the person to respond. Most people feel calmer and more receptive when they have had a chance to speak and be heard.

Here is a sample script of how you might approach the employee:

“You have always been very reliable. Lately, I have noticed that you have been missing work on Mondays and are making more mistakes. You have appeared less focused on your work. Are you having some difficulty at present?”

Ideally the employee will level with you about his or her struggle. It may be appropriate to remind them of the confidential counselling available through the Interlock Employee and Family Assistance Program.

When suggesting the EFAP, present this as one option for the employee to consider. Even if you think you know what the employee’s problem is, avoid using labels, diagnoses or falling into a counselling role.

While you want to be supportive, as a supervisor you also need to be clear and factual about performance issues and expectations. It can be a delicate balance and requires skill, diplomacy and clarity.

quick action can prevent major workplace disruptions

If the employee discloses that he or she has a substance abuse problem, you may also need to provide appropriate workplace accommodation. Consult with Human Resources for further assistance in this area.

Early intervention is recommended as it allows the issue to be dealt with quickly and effectively. The quick action can prevent major workplace disruptions and provides timely assistance for the employee in getting needed help or support.

In Appendix A, please find a sample tracking sheet that managers can use or modify to track areas of concern, informal talks with employees or formal meeting with employees.

THE ROLE OF INTERLOCK

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Interlock works with you to address these important issues by providing confidential coaching and support to managers and supervisors who are working with employees. You can speak with an Interlock consultant about any questions or concerns you may have. Typically, this management consultation is conducted over the phone and addresses issues as they arise. However, if you prefer, you can also arrange an in-person appointment with an Interlock consultant.

Interlock can also provide on-site training sessions on managing depression. Contact Interlock at 1.800.663.9099 if you would like to organize a training session.

Where you have contacted Interlock with regard to a suggested referral, details about this referral can

be flagged in Interlock's information management system. Although it is preferable for the client to contact Interlock directly for an appointment, you may book the appointment with the client's consent. Interlock will not confirm whether an individual has followed up on the suggestion to seek assistance unless the client has provided written consent.

If your company has a formal referral policy and work performance has been adversely affected, service can be arranged for the employee by the supervisor. Typically, this will follow one or more suggested referrals that have not led to an improvement in performance.

impaired employees threaten the safety of other employees and customers

TRAINING

Interlock can also provide training sessions for employees or supervisors addressing the issue of substance abuse. Contact Interlock at 1-800-663-9099 if you would like to organize a training session.

SCREENING

All clients using the EFAP service will be asked to complete a Client Questionnaire which contains a few questions that assess for the presence of substance abuse issues. Counsellors and clients will decide how best to integrate the information provided by this questionnaire in their work together.

TYPES OF TREATMENT

- Detox
- Out-patient
- In-patient (residential)

RECOMMENDED
LITERATURE ON
SUBSTANCE ABUSE

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BENNET, J. B., & LEHMAN, W. E. K. (2002).
Preventing workplace substance abuse:
Beyond drug testing to wellness. American
Psychological Assoc.

FEARING, J. (2000).
Workplace intervention: The bottom line on helping
addicted employees become productive again.
Hazelden Publishing & Educational Services.

KETCHAM, K., ASBURY, W. F., SCHULSTAD, M.,
CIARAMICOLI, A. P. (2000).
Beyond the influence: Understanding and defeating
alcoholism. Bantam.

PROCHASKA, J. O., NORCROSS, J. C., & DICLEMENTE,
C. C. (1995).
Changing for good. Avon Books.

WEBSITE RESOURCES ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE



*BC Partners for Mental Health and
Addictions Information
(www.heretohelp.bc.ca)*

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
(www.ccsa.ca)

Prevention Source BC
(www.preventionsource.bc.ca)

Council on Substance Abuse
(www.actionnorth.net)

Barbara Butler & Associates Inc.
(www.ccsa.ca)



INTERLOCK EMPLOYEE & FAMILY ASSISTANCE

CALL: 1.800.663.9099

or visit: www.interlockeap.com



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