

Employers' guide: Alcohol and drug awareness for employers

Supplementary information

Canadian Model for Providing a Safe Workplace – Version 6.0 – July 1, 2018

The purpose of the Canadian Model for Providing a Safe Workplace (Canadian Model) is to contribute to a safe workplace for all workers by reducing the risks associated with the inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs. This supplementary information is intended to help create awareness and enhance understanding of the Canadian Model. If there is any lack of clarity or apparent conflict between the supplementary information and the Canadian Model, the terms of the Canadian Model Version 6.0 shall prevail. For more information, visit coaa.ab.ca and EnergySafetyCanada.com.

Introduction

This employers' guide has been provided with the Canadian Model as a tool for companies to adopt. As an employer, you are encouraged to implement the policy and guidelines for your employees and your entire operations.

Endorsement

Successful implementation of this policy throughout your company will only happen if it has the support, endorsement and active participation of the highest level of management. That commitment must be communicated to everyone in your company and reinforced with the message that it is corporate policy.

Successful implementation also requires committing sufficient funds for effectively rolling out the policy and assigning the necessary people to make it happen.

Communications plan

An effective policy requires communicating with every person at every level that a policy is in place. Each member of the management team must be committed to its implementation. To reinforce the importance, it is recommended that a policy statement, signed by the chief executive officer, is prominently displayed throughout the company and at various operations points.

The successful implementation and acceptance of the policy requires:

- Ensuring that a written policy is in place and is readily accessible to each individual
- Communicating to and cooperating with the organized labour provider (if applicable)
- Communicating expectations and enforcement guidelines to each employee.

Commitment

Once the policy is endorsed, it will still require ongoing commitment and attention. Regular meetings with personnel assigned to implement the policy shows your continuing interest and the importance you place on the implementation of the policy and its success. Your interest, as the employer, creates accountability that is transparent and effective.

It is important to note that commitment on the corporation's part includes the need to apply the policy universally to all employees, at every level.

Education

To achieve true progress with this Canadian Model, attitudes relating to alcohol and drug use affecting workplace performance must shift among all workers such that no one accepts any workplace safety risks associated with alcohol and drug use. The proven tool for changing attitudes is education. Employers will find that an investment in effective education will have a significant payback for reducing safety incidents.

The following topics should be covered through various educational vehicles.

For all workers, include the following subjects:

- Safety concerns and safety focus of the policy
- Key elements of the policy, particularly the work rule standards, the alcohol and drug testing procedures and the circumstances for which the policy requires alcohol and drug testing
- Effects on workers that result from alcohol and drug use
- Behaviours that a person demonstrates when under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- The role of employee assistance programs (EAPs) and how to access these services
- Second chance principles of the policy that focus on rehabilitation and re-employment.

For company supervisors, include the following subjects:

- Intervention techniques and styles with people who are suspected of being at work under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- Proper investigation and inquiry procedures when interviewing employees and investigating incidents pursuant to the policy requirements
- Effective decision-making procedures in applying the alcohol and drug testing requirements of the policy
- Return to work and relapse issues
- Proper management of policy information obtained pursuant to policy application
- Managing and structuring conditional return-to-work agreements
- Appropriate communication with crew members about the content of the policy
- Referral procedures to employee assistance services programs and the full capability and potential of these services.

Excellent and well-established education programs about the policy are available through labour providers, employer associations and community programs offered by organizations such as AADAC (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission). Utilizing those programs, along with customized communication and education packages that are aligned with your company's circumstances, will go a long way toward achieving the policy goal to ensure workplaces are free from the safety risks associated with alcohol and drug use.

Implementing the Canadian Model

It is recognized that the use of illicit drugs and the inappropriate use of alcohol and prescription and non-prescription drugs can have serious adverse effects on a person's health, safety and job performance. Implementing a solid industry-wide model, including both a policy and guidelines, will help to enhance the level of health and safety at the workplace. In rolling out the Canadian Model, it is critical to think through the structure prior to implementation.

Here are some points to consider prior to implementing the Canadian Model.

- Make arrangements for access to substance abuse expert services
- Identify your EAP service provider, and ensure employees know how to access those EAP services
- Establish the testing and notification criteria you will use
- Identify who your testing provider and medical review officer will be
- Set up an account with your testing provider and receive your client code number
- Identify who your designated employer representative will be and communicate that to the testing provider. Your designated employer representative is the person who will receive all confidential records and invoices
- Identify who will be authorized to make appointments and receive results. This person(s) may or may not be the same person as the designated employer representative
- Establish clear and concise guidelines and procedures for booking appointments so you ensure consistency with all people being identified as potential employees.