

Employee Education: Substance Abuse

What is a drug & alcohol education program?

- A drug & alcohol education program is a systematic approach to providing employees with the information they need to fully understand, cooperate with and benefit from their organization's drug-free workplace program.
- In order to be held accountable current employees must be given notice of the creation of or any changes to a company's drug-free workplace program. New employees should be informed when hired. ALL employees should participate in employee education.

What should your employee education include?

- Details of the drug-free workplace policy and program
- General information about the nature of alcohol and drug abuse
- The impact of alcohol and other drugs on work performance, health and personal and family life
- How to access assistance, hopefully, before problems appear on the job
- How employee performance problems will be evaluated
- How referrals for assistance will be handled
- Confidentiality and other employee protections in the policy
- Types of help that are available for individuals with alcohol and drug related problems, either through the organization or community based service providers

How should the message be delivered?

The message should be delivered on an ongoing basis through a variety of means, not as a one-time effort. Possible ways to communicate the message include:

- Forums for employee education
- Home mailings or payroll stuffers
- Posters and displays in the workplace
- Brownbag lunches or guest speakers
- Seminars and sessions at new employee orientation
- Extra material on hand for employees to browse at their leisure
- A company website or add an additional page on an already existing site that deals with substance abuse issues.

Possible educational opportunities can include:

- Talking to your children and other youngsters about substance abuse as well as life skills and decision-making
- Community-based prevention efforts and activities
- Researching substance abuse via the web, pamphlets, videos, and books
- Lifestyle adjustments, stress reduction, health promotion, and disease prevention

Employee education is a very important and necessary part of any drug free workplace program. If employees are not aware of the reasons behind the program they may become defensive and look at it as a punishment. It is important that employers dispel this myth immediately. Employers should stress that the program was created to ensure a safer, healthier work environment for everyone.

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