



JOB AID

Drugs and Alcohol: The Facts
About Substance Abuse

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Substance abuse is the use of illegal substances or misuse of legal substances like alcohol, prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs. It may be recreational, social or based on addiction.

Effects of Substance Abuse

Substance abuse:

- Causes physical, mental and emotional damage to the individual
- Hurts not only the person who uses but also everyone with whom the person is involved
- Creates shame and embarrassment and career, legal and medical problems

Substance Abuse in the Workplace

Workplace alcohol, tobacco and other drug-related problems cost companies due to:

- Accidents and injuries
- Time lost from work
- Processing substance abuse cases
- Insurance costs
- Legal counsel
- Productivity losses

How to Help

Signs of substance abuse include changes in physical appearance as well as changes in behavior. Patterns and behaviors to be aware of in the workplace include:

- Abrupt changes in behavior, conversation and mood
- Disengagement from co-workers
- Poor physical hygiene
- Frequent illness and health problems
- Increased absences, tardiness, errors, and other changes affecting workplace productivity
- Increasing problems at home, including financial issues

When you know someone with a substance abuse problem who won't seek help:

- Stop covering up for them
- Intervene when they are sober – with several people present
- Be specific – use examples of the problem
- State the results of their not getting help
- State what you will do to protect yourself
- Call on others to talk to the person
- If it's work-related, consult management first

Reducing the Risk of Substance Abuse

To reduce the risk of substance abuse, employees can:

- Seek counseling
- Utilize the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) available to employees
 - Provides confidential counseling services and targeted support for employees facing difficult life events
- In the U.S., dial 988 or go to <https://988lifeline.org> to access the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline; Similar helplines exist outside the U.S.