



JOB AID

Reasonable Suspicion Training for
Alcohol and Substance Abuse
in the Workplace

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Steps for Identifying Employees Who May Be Abusing a Substance

1. Have an Initial Suspicion

Remember:

- Your job is to recognize the signs and begin the investigation process
- You should NEVER diagnose the problem
- Never assume that the things you observe are caused by drugs or alcohol
 - Avoid assumptions by focusing on performance

Grounds for suspicion include when an employee:

- Has an accident involving a company vehicle or personal vehicle used for business
- Has an on-the-job accident
- Exhibits severe changes in behavior, attitude, physical appearance, speech or odor

One of the most obvious causes for initial suspicion is the presence of a substance. If you see any contraband or evidence, confiscate it.

Indicators of Substance Abuse

Indicators	
Physical indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have slurred speech• Seem unusually drowsy or hyperactive• Exhibit impaired coordination and reaction times• Have physical appearance changes• Have physical condition changes (poor vision, poor hygiene, etc.)• Have changes in appetite• Appear malnourished
Emotional indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have wide mood swings• Be suspicious or make unfounded complaints about others• Have unreasonable resentments• Have emotional outbursts• Exhibit mood changes after lunch or a break• Seem to have a significant personality change• Show decreased job performance• Have relationship issues (home/work)• Avoid interacting with a supervisor• Overreact to real/imagined criticism• Avoid/withdraw from peers• Inspire complaints from co-workers• Borrow or steal money from co-workers• Make persistent requests for job transfers• Complain about problems at home
Action indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be overly withdrawn or overly talkative• Spend excessive time on the phone• Be argumentative• Have an exaggerated sense of self-importance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid interacting with a supervisor • Exhibit violent or make threats (this requires immediate attention) • Take needless risks
Absenteeism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have increased or repeated absences/tardiness • Have more absenteeism Mondays, Fridays or after holidays • Have frequent “emergency” absences • Have unexplained disappearances during the workday • Make frequent requests to leave work early • Take long breaks • Repeatedly complain about physical illnesses on the job
Work-related indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent quality of work • High/low periods of productivity • Poor judgment • More mistakes • Difficulty concentrating or remembering information or instructions • Difficulty handling complex situations

2. Conduct an Employee Interview

DO:

- Act in a calm, quiet and professional manner
- Conduct the interview in your office or other private location
- Attempt to have a second management person as a witness
- Document the interview in the employee interview guide (if applicable)
- Send applicable information to Human Resources

DO NOT:

- Diagnose the problem
- Use force
- Violate the employee’s privacy by discussing the issue with other employees
- Get sidetracked onto other issues during the interview

If the employee refuses to be interviewed, have a witness and document the employee's reaction.

3. Determine If There Is Reasonable Suspicion

Reasonable suspicion is:

- A legal standard of proof in United States law
- A suspicion based on specific facts or observations rather than “feelings” or “hunches”
- When facts can be put together to draw rational conclusions or inferences

When you think you have reasonable suspicion that an employee is using drugs or alcohol:

- Consider all variables (allergies, medications, personal problems, etc.)
- If you are unsure, use the “reasonable person” standard
 - Would a reasonable person look at the facts and have the same suspicion?
- Try to obtain witnesses
- Consult Human Resources, as needed

4. Conduct Testing

Only supervisors trained to recognize the signs of drug use and alcohol misuse may determine when reasonable suspicion testing is warranted. Inform HR as soon as possible that an employee is being tested.

If testing is needed:

- Call the collection site or testing center to arrange for a collection
- Transport and accompany the employee to the collection site
- If the employee declines testing, remind the employee of company and regulatory policies

Alcohol Testing

- An alcohol test must be performed by a trained breath alcohol technician (BAT)
- The technician conducts the test using federally approved evidential breath testing devices (EBTs), commonly known as breathalyzers
- Breathalyzers determine blood alcohol content (BAC) by measuring alcohol on the breath
- Both negative and positive results are reported directly to the company contact person by a medical review officer (MRO)

Drug Testing

- A technician collects a urine sample
- A lab analyzes the sample
- MRO verifies test results
- MRO provides employer with test results

Note: Some states have ruled drug testing illegal except in situations regulated by federal law for transportation and safety-sensitive workers, or for reasonable suspicion.

5. Help the Employee Home

Company policy may require you to offer to:

- Call a cab, relative or friend to come collect the employee
- Provide other transportation
- Transport the employee to his or her home yourself

Make every legal and reasonable effort to encourage the employee to accept transportation and not attempt to drive. If the employee refuses, you must advise the employee of the consequences. Remember NOT to use force or coerce the employee.

6. Follow Up and Document

- Follow up and document, even if no testing was performed
- Contact Human Resources after you receive any test results for the possible next steps
- Contact the employee with the approved action
- Complete and submit all documentation
- Let Human Resources help you determine the appropriate next steps for employees who receive positive drug or alcohol test results