



Plan and Implement a Program

Learn how to plan and implement a drug-free workplace program and select evidence-based prevention interventions to address substance-related issues.

Your drug-free workplace initiative can be an invaluable tool in efforts to strengthen and protect your business and your employees from the hazards of alcohol and other drug misuse. These six steps will help you build a customized program:

1. **Assess your workplace and its needs related to substance use.**
2. **Identify available resources.**
3. **Develop a written policy for your drug-free workplace.**
4. **Determine whether to have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).**
5. **Determine whether to do drug testing.**
6. **Plan to provide education and training for your employees and additional training for supervisors and other appropriate staff.**

Building a Customized Program

Assess Your Workplace Needs

Many drug-free workplace needs are best addressed within a health and wellness atmosphere, rather than a more punitive program. Learn more about how to [assess your workplace](#) to develop an appropriate policy for your organization.

Identify Available Resources

Types of resources you might inventory as part of your planning process include:

- An existing drug-free workplace policy
- An existing drug-testing program
- Human resources staff
- A health promotion or health and wellness program already in place
- An EAP already in place

Develop a Drug-Free Workplace Policy

A written drug-free workplace policy is the cornerstone of an effective program. Learn more about how to [develop a policy](#).

Determine Whether To Have an EAP

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are programs sponsored by your business or organization—or by a union—to serve employees and their families. EAPs range from addressing only problems related to alcohol and other drug use to covering a broad range of issues. Some programs also include health and wellness activities.

All organizations should seriously consider adding the services of an internal, external, or blended EAP of both internal and external supports. Small businesses might be able to obtain EAP services through their insurance carriers or by joining a consortium of small businesses to get cost-effective rates. The need for an EAP is even greater if a high proportion of your employees are also at risk for social and emotional problems.

Learn more about how to [provide support with an EAP](#).

Determine Whether to Include Drug Testing

Drug testing is an organizational protective factor that can deter employees from coming to work unfit for duty. The first consideration regarding drug testing is to determine whether it is required for some or all of your employees. You may decide to have a drug-testing program:

- To comply with federal regulations
- To comply with customer or contract requirements
- To comply with insurance carrier requirements
- To reinforce the organization's "no drug use" position
- To identify employees with substance use disorders and refer them for assistance
- To establish grounds for discipline or firing
- To improve safety
- To deter recreational drug use that could lead to addiction
- To reduce the costs of alcohol and other drug misuse in the workplace

Employers that are required by one or more federal agencies, such as those in safety- and security-sensitive industries, to test for drugs should refer to applicable regulations to determine the necessary types of testing. Testing might also be a mandatory subject of collective bargaining if employees are part of a union.

Educate Employees and Train Supervisors

Having a plan for introducing and explaining the drug-free workplace program to employees and for informing them about substance-use-related issues will be important to your program's overall success.

Learn more about providing education and training for employees and supervisors.

Using Evidence-based Prevention Interventions

Prevention programs and strategies that SAMHSA has deemed effective or that have been accepted as scientifically sound in a peer-reviewed journal or other source can serve as a

central part of your drug-free workplace initiatives. Such programs have been carefully implemented and rigorously evaluated, with consistently positive outcomes. These programs can be used to further enhance your drug-free workplace and substance misuse prevention initiatives. You can find more information on evidence-based interventions at [SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices](#).

- [Coping With Work and Family Stress: A Workplace Preventive Intervention](#) (link is external) is a 16-session weekly group intervention designed to teach employees how to develop effective coping strategies for dealing with stressors at work and at home
- [Team Awareness](#)(link is external) is a six-module workplace-training program that addresses behavioral risks associated with substance use among employees, their coworkers, and (indirectly) their families
- [The Healthy Workplace Program](#)(link is external) is a set of workplace substance use prevention interventions that reduce unsafe drinking, illegal drug use, and [prescription drug misuse and abuse](#) while improving the health practices of adult workers.
- [The Wellness Outreach at Work](#)(link is external) program provides comprehensive health risk-reduction services to all employees at a workplace. The program uses health screening, follow-up, and worksite health promotion programs. It also integrates alcohol education into the context of health-risk counseling.

Sustaining the Program

Successful drug-free workplace programs are ongoing and evolving. Sustain your program by integrating it into the workplace culture and environment and keeping the program responsive to changing conditions.

Ensure Good Communication

Effective ways to communicate include electronic communications and media, written materials, charts, meetings, question-and-answer sessions, and a suggestion box. Periodically repeating messages is important to ensuring that communication is successful.

Conduct Ongoing Review and Evaluation of Program Results

If you cannot measure the effectiveness of your program, you cannot manage it. Keep daily records of the program that include how much is being spent on activities, including time, dollars, and number of positive drug tests; what activities are taking place; and the number of people attending. Obtain feedback on all activities, and revise the program as necessary to meet the specific and changing needs of the workplace. For example, if your locality just changed its marijuana laws, determine whether new messages concerning your drug-free workplace policy need to be clarified and revised for employees.

Be sure to evaluate your program for specific results. For instance, if a program goal is to lower employee absenteeism, use current employee absenteeism records to establish a baseline against which you can measure the results of your program at a set time period. Evaluation measurements can be used regularly to identify flaws in the program. Measurements can also identify trends—both positive and negative—to uncover best practices and improvement opportunities.

Stay Current

Drug-free workplace programs are continually being studied, advanced, and upgraded. Keep abreast of best practices and programs by joining local drug-free advocacy groups or community coalitions. Small-business associations and trade and professional organizations might also provide up-to-date information about drug-free workplace issues. You could also ask a group of employees to periodically review the program and suggest appropriate changes.

Involve Your Employees

Some employers and unions survey their employees or members and their families regarding their interest in substance misuse and health and wellness programs. Many EAPs also offer or arrange for both general and specialized employee education activities.

Take Additional Actions

Here are some other actions that employers can take to help sustain the drug-free workplace effort:

- Host alcohol-free events to emphasize the organization's commitment to preventing injuries and deaths associated with drinking and driving, especially around the holidays.
- Serve as a positive role model, consistent with your messages to your employees.
- Sponsor or help with prevention services in your community that would benefit your employees and their families.
- Include healthy lifestyle articles in your organization's newsletter.
- Appoint a corporate representative to serve on and support any local substance use prevention-oriented programs or community partnerships in your area.
- Encourage employees and their family members to ask for help.
- Recognize that treatment is more cost-effective than unsafe working conditions and lost productivity caused by alcohol- or drug-related problems