



Supervisor Newsletter

Recommended Impaired Employee Protocol

Employees within all job classifications and work settings can be affected by substance use disorders. Substance abuse impacts an individual's cognitive ability and judgment. It is important then for supervisors to be able to determine if an employee appears impaired by observation of physical appearance or behavior. The following are some signs and symptoms that could indicate workplace impairment:

- Performance issues or variability in performance.
- Increased short-term absence or being clearly unwell.
- Increased unreliability or variations in reliability.
- Increased accidents or near-misses.
- Personality changes such as heightened aggression, paranoia, irritability.
- Signs of high stress.
- Prioritizing an opportunity for drinking or using drugs over important work deadlines or other pastimes previously enjoyed.
- Excessive drinking and inappropriate behavior at work-related events.
- Money or relationship issues.

If signs of impairment are present, when possible, have another management representative personally observe the appearance and behavior of the employee. Document the observations and sign the Reasonable Suspicion Form along with the other manager, adding any pertinent information to the documentation. If documented evidence of impairment exists, (the employee is unable to maintain acceptable work performance), advise the employee that he/she will not be permitted to continue work. Emphasize that you are concerned for their health and safety as well as the health and safety of others in the workplace.

If the employee seems medically unstable, makes statements about harming self or others, they need to be transported by a rescue service and/or police to the nearest emergency room for evaluation. Call 911 and report any and all concerns and observations. Fully document all facts regarding what occurred and notify HR and/or your supervisor at the earliest possible time.

Adhere to the Substance Abuse Policy

The next steps will depend on the company substance abuse policy. Substance abuse policies must

always be enforced fairly, but often proportionately based on an assessment of safety hazards associated with specific job and workplace safety risks. For example, employees in safety-sensitive positions are regularly held to higher standards of workplace conduct than workers in administrative positions. Workplace safety must always remain a top priority, especially in industries where even a minor lapse in judgment or concentration can have serious consequences. In sectors such as manufacturing, construction, and logistics, making sure that employees are drug-free and fit for duty is essential.

Drug Testing

Keep in mind that impairment can be the result of various situations, including many that are temporary or short term. Issues that may distract a person from focusing on their tasks include those that are related to family or relationship problems, fatigue (mental or physical), traumatic shock, or medical conditions or treatments. However, in any case of workplace impairment, a drug test will be required to ensure that drug or alcohol abuse is *not* what is causing the problem(s).

The substance abuse policy will include statements regarding under what circumstances substance testing will be conducted, as well as the

criteria for testing and interpretation of test results.

Drug testing is imperative in ensuring a safe and drug free workplace, and urine and saliva drug tests have long been the standard in workplace safety protocols. When deciding which type of test to use, keep in mind that both types of tests can take 24 to 72 hours to deliver *confirmed* results, and saliva tests—while more convenient—are not designed to detect long-term substance use. Both forms of testing are available in the form of onsite, instant tests, but negative employment action should not be based on an unconfirmed instant test. If serious disciplinary action (such as employment termination) is ultimately to be taken, wait for the results of the test confirmation from the lab.

Consequences

After reviewing the substance abuse policy, the results of the drug test, and any prior disciplinary status and/or agreements with the employee, a determination will now need to be made about what consequences will follow, including a requirement for counseling/treatment clearance prior to return to work and/or disciplinary action up to or including termination. If the company has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), notify the EAP administrator as soon as possible.



DrugFree@WorkPlace

November is National Gratitude Month

November of each calendar year was proclaimed as National Gratitude Month in the U.S. back in 2015. During this month of thankfulness, many people who are in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs take time to pause and be grateful for their sobriety.

Here is a list of some of the most common things that people in recovery say they are grateful for:

- More self-respect.
- Higher degree of self-worth.
- Improved financial status.
- Feeling more optimistic.
- Experiencing inspiration.
- Making better life choices.
- Better health.
- Being more physically fit.
- Job security.
- Higher energy levels.
- Clearer skin and eyes.
- More positive emotions.
- Return of creativity.
- Spirituality.
- Rekindled relationships.
- Quality time with family.

Gratitude is important because it helps those in recovery to see what is good in life, and the goodness in others. Focusing on these positive attributes makes maintaining sobriety much easier.

Benefits of Gratitude

Years of research have proven that expressions of gratitude can improve a person's life. Addiction experts know that gratitude reduces "triggers" to relapse such as symptoms of depression and anxiety. Being thankful eases stress and improves physical health by reducing chronic pain.

Being thankful improves sleep, builds stronger relationships, and increases positive emotions like happiness and joy.

Gratefulness promotes empathy for others, reduces aggressive behavior, boosts self-esteem, and builds resiliency in times of trouble. All of these are preventive measures against relapse.

Expressing Gratitude

As the holiday season begins, now is a good time to reflect on all that we should be grateful for, and to express that gratitude to others.

One of the things that people in recovery often say they are most grateful for is their job. There is no doubt that having a stable job is something to be thankful for. A steady income is necessary to cover basic needs, take care of one's family and save for the future. A good job can offer new skills and opportunities that might not otherwise be available.

Having caring, helpful coworkers and teammates is another reason to be thankful. Working with people you trust, like, and get along well with is a blessing in life. Being able to call a coworker a friend is definitely a reason to be thankful.

Working for and reporting to a boss who cares about you and your professional development is also an important situation to be appreciative of. There is nothing wrong with saying "thank you for being a great boss" to a manager or supervisor who has your best interest at heart.

Any workplace that recognizes worker's contributions and compensates employees well is a providential place to work. Too many people do not have a privilege like this to be thankful for (consider all the people in the world who are working at jobs they hate).

Having a good work-life balance is another reason to stop and give thanks. Being in a work environment that encourages one to spend time outside of work with friends and family, and enjoying personal time is something to appreciate.

How to Feel More Grateful

Embracing a perspective of gratitude will always lead to a happier, more meaningful life, but only if the gratitude is authentic. For those who struggle with feeling grateful, often, just committing to think of one thing to be genuinely thankful for will be enough to open the heart to more.

Here are some suggestions on how to practice gratitude:

- Say what you are grateful for out loud, at least once a day.
- Share your gratitude with others.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Reframe negative thoughts.
- Have visual reminders (photos of loved ones, good times, etc.).
- Volunteer and give to others.
- Notice and appreciate small things.
- Thank yourself.
- Focus outward, not inward.
- Change your perspective (imagine being in the shoes of someone who is less fortunate than you).

Practicing gratitude makes one better equipped to handle the difficulties of life that inevitably arise. An attitude of gratitude is a powerful prevention measure to protect against substance abuse and relapse.

The following suicide prevention information, while provided by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, will also be helpful to those in states other than Georgia. All online resources listed are available to users nationwide.

With Veterans Day coming up on November 11th, this month's article focuses on ways to support friends and family members who are currently serving or have previously served in the United States armed forces.

To get a better sense of which issues are currently at the forefront of veterans' concerns, we asked DBHDD's Veteran Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Derix Paloadé, what some of the current major concerns were for veterans and active service members:

"Access to support for the families of active-duty service members and veterans has been limited, with issues of food insecurity, limited or inadequate housing, and childcare being at the top of the list," said Paloadé.

With suicide being the second-leading cause of death among veterans under age 45 years old in 2021 (and the 13th-leading cause of death for veterans of all age groups) focusing on the immediate concerns of younger active service members is a pragmatic approach. "Offering better options for those that are currently serving and those that have served will strengthen the family unit as a whole," Paloadé continued.

Though many of us want to help, supporting veterans can often seem like an insurmountable task best left to people with lots of letters after their names. To hear that many veteran's concerns are issues that many of us face brings the problem a little closer to home. There is some promising legislation in the works to address some of these issues, but there is also a lot we can do as civilians to help support our veteran friends, family, and community members to help improve their overall quality of life.

If you have an active service member that you would like to support on Veterans Day, find out if there are activities that you could do to alleviate some of life's stressors by offering to help in various areas. A "thank you for your service," is often appreciated, but a true offer of support may go even further to show gratitude.

Our armed service members have grown accustomed to being the ones called in when others need help and are not often comfortable receiving support, so they may not be quick to accept it, but that does not mean they don't need it. Asking for help is difficult for most of us, and even harder for our veterans. However, knowing that they are surrounded by people ready to help in any way within their power is a strong message that may relieve some of the burden our veterans shoulder on top of the daily life stressors that we all face.

To learn more about suicide prevention, visit the DBHDD website at:
<https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/suicide-prevention>.

Or contact the Suicide Prevention Director, Rachael Holloman, at:
rachael.holloman@dbhdd.ga.gov.