

Drug Abuse in the Workplace

Bradley Jordan

425 Chemical Dependency in the Workplace

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Dawn Weldon

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Drug abuse in the workplace exists within companies all over the world. The concern of each company is the safety of all employees, shareholders, insurer's, suppliers and clients. Some illicit drugs that individual tend to abuse are ecstasy, cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and prescription drugs. If the war against drugs is not resolved in the workplace, then the economy of this country will fall.

The National Survey statistics show that 75% of the people employed are drug users. The percentage number can be calculated into 12.3 million people. It is in the company best interest to provide a drug-free workplace and bring awareness. This particular approach will keep the company competitive globally. In the construction environment, the OSHA act is a legal policy that must be followed by all construction companies. The act ensures a legal safety procedure for all construction employees. For example, OSHA states that for every 25 workers, a safety coordinator must be assign. Safety harness must be worn if an employee is elevated six-feet high. Seatbelt and headlights must be worn when operating a mobile vehicle. The construction industry is the most dangerous job in America. This particular industry has more fatality than any other industry in the world. 1,186 fatal injuries were recorded by OSHA in 2005. Residential building construction, highway construction, bridge construction, and utility construction are just a few occupations that increased the fatalities in the construction industry. “ Based on what is known about the effects of drug use, it is safe to say that construction workers who abuse drugs cause more accidents, increase workers' compensation costs, create more rework, increase turnover rates and take away from a company's competitive edge” (BLS, 2005). Most companies in the Unites States have different drug screening method, but the majority relies on a urine drug

testing. Although many large contractors use some form of drug testing, most currently rely on urine-based technologies.

Other Related Issues

Urine drug screening is not 100% reliable because employees and potential employees have found avenues to pass the test with unclean urine. Certain stores sell clean urine and have liquid products that will clean the employee's urine instantly. For example, employees were called in the office for a random drug screen. Two of the employees were marijuana users. One drug using employee passed the drug screen by using his or her coworkers urine. The other employee passed the drug screen by drinking a great deal of water and a capful of bleach. Drug test cheating has become a regular routine for employees and potential employees. This particular problem has been recognized by Robert Stephenson, which is the director of the Mental Health Services and the Substance Abuse Administration. Mr. Robert Stephenson has concerns about the reliability of urine drug testing.

Ramification if Not Addressed

“Substance abuse costs American businesses approximately \$10,000 per drug abuser due to productivity losses, absenteeism and increased insurance premiums”(BLS, 2005). For example, workers compensation is filed more by drug abuser than drug-free employees. Filing compensation also increases the insurances premium. Another problem that exists relates to crime on the job. If drug abuse is not addressed, then the drug abuser tends to commit theft. Statistics show that 32% of high shrink are committed by an employee that uses drugs. The United States spends an estimated 180 billion dollars a year on drug abuse. If this particular problem is not resolved, the country could bankrupt.

Tangible Benefits of Resolving the Problem

The benefit of having a drug-free work place will potentially deter drug abusers applying for a job. Also, this particular method will lower the chance of employees having an accident. Another benefit is the company will enhance the productivity and boost the employee's morale. Having a drug-free workplace also decreases the insurance cost and lowers the liability within the company. The most important benefit is employees are able to work in a safe environment.

Solutions

Many companies have programs in place, but educating employees and bringing awareness is the key to possibly eliminating drugs within the company. This particular method could potentially erase drugs in the community. The reason why people are so tempted to do drugs are because they only hear how good it makes people feel. People never hear about the side effects or how drugs damage the body.

Conclusion

Companies around the United States protect the rights of employees. Drug programs are put in place to have a safe working environment. It is virtually impossible to have an complete drug-free environment, but companies are taking the necessary precaution to keep the employees safe. This particular article affects people in the world. I strongly suggest that citizens join forces with the company and fight drugs.

Reference

Cholakis, P.N., & Bruce, R.(2007 July) Drug testing in the workplace. Professional Safety
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