

Talking Points for Drug Free Workplace policy/WorkAlert

- Expenses related to lost productivity due to substance abuse in Maine totaled more than \$155.6 million in 2005.¹
- 13.8% of Maine adults ages 21-24 report working while feeling the effects or after-effects of alcohol.²
- Between 10 and 20% of the nation's workers who are fatally injured on the job test positive for alcohol or other drugs.³
- Low productivity, workplace injuries, low employee morale, employee illnesses, and poor company image are some of the effects that substance abuse can have on the workplace and eventually affect the bottom line.⁴
- Generally, past month illicit drug users were less likely to report working for employers who offered workplace drug or alcohol programs or policies, compared with those who did not use an illicit drug in the past month.⁵
- Clear and consistent substance abuse policies and drug education efforts can significantly reduce drug and alcohol abuse in workplaces by creating an aware and informed workforce.
- Alcohol use on and off the job causes problems for non-drinking co-workers: a study found that one out of five employees reports that alcohol problems of people they work with caused them to fear injury, work harder, redo work or cover for the drinker.⁶
- No organization is too small to be concerned about creating a workplace free of the effects of alcohol and other drug abuse. Problems related to alcohol and other drug abuse can arise in a workplace of any size, and a workplace without a policy or program is exactly where problems are likely to occur.⁷
- Organizations that don't have Drug-Free Workplace programs tend to be places where alcohol or other drug abusers want to work. Having a program in place now can reduce costly problems in the future. In addition to all of the other health, safety, and security risks that can arise, no employer wants to be the employer of choice for people who abuse alcohol or other drugs.⁸

1 Maine Office of Substance Abuse (2007) The cost of alcohol and drug abuse in Maine 2005. Augusta, ME: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/osa/pubs/data/2007/Cost2007.doc>

2 Maine Office of Substance Abuse, 2004 Maine General Population Drug and Alcohol Use Survey <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/osa/pubs/data/2004/genpop04/pdf>

3 Weber, W. and Cox, C. "Analysis of Toxicology Reports: Work-Related Fatal Injuries in 1998," Compensation and Working Conditions, Spring 2001, pp.27-29.

4 Maine Office of Substance Abuse. <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/osa/prevention/workplace/index.htm>

5 Larson, Sharon L. Eyerman, Joe. Foster, Misty S. Gfroerer, Joseph C. Worker Substance Use and Workplace Policies and Programs, June 2007, p. 34

6 Mangione, T.W. et al. 1998. New Perspectives for Worksite Alcohol Strategies: Results from a Corporate Drinking Study. Boston, MA: JSI Research and Training Institute.

7 Hallmarks of Drug Free Workplace Programs. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Division of Workplace Programs.

<http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov/ResourceCenter/r38.aspx> retrieved 3/13/09

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- WorkAlert helps employers protect their employees and business by providing:
 - A guide about how to involve employees in creating a workplace substance abuse policy.
 - A link to the US Department Of Labor's Drug-Free Workplace Policy Builder to develop a customized policy that is right for each business.
 - A guide about how to share the policy with all employees
 - A list of local community coalitions who are willing to help businesses get started.
 - A workplace poster that can be customized with employee assistance information and local resources for employees who may need help.

WorkAlert

WorkAlert is a combined media campaign and business tool that targets businesses with 20 to 50 employees. It is designed to help employers protect their employees and businesses from the negative impact of substance abuse. WorkAlert will help employers develop and implement a Drug-Free Workplace Policy that can lead to the implementation of a comprehensive Drug-Free Workplace Program.

Alcohol use on and off the job causes problems for non-drinking co-workers. One out of five employees report that the alcohol problems of people they work with cause them to fear injury, work harder, redo work or cover for the drinker. In 2005, expenses related to lost productivity due to substance abuse in Maine totaled more than \$155.6 million.

Along with radio and print ads, postcard mailings, and worksite posters WorkAlert consists of step by step instructions that an employer can take to develop a Drug Free Workplace Policy. An important component is the link to the US Department of Labor's online policy builder. By answering a series of questions about their workplace, employers can develop and download a customized workplace substance abuse policy that is right for their business. Clear and consistent substance abuse policies can significantly reduce drug and alcohol abuse in workplaces and impact a company's bottom line.

Presenters Guide to “Yeah, But...” for the Substance Abuse and the Workplace Prevention for Employers

For Presenter: The following are possible questions or comments from participants that we have labeled as “Yeah, but...” This guide provides responses to possible “Yeah, but...” However, when in doubt, acknowledge the statement, and refer them to the Frequently Asked Question section of the OSA SAW website (www.maineosa.org/prevention/workplace) and to Geoffrey Miller, Prevention Specialist at the Office of Substance Abuse at geoff.miller@maine.gov .

Yeah, but as a small employer, I don’t have the time to spend to develop such a program and my employee’s need to do their work.

The development of a Drug Free Workplace Program is based on the needs and resources of a company. If time is a resource that you don’t have, perhaps consider looking at strategies that take little time and delegate to an employee(s) to include them in the process. Two no / low cost strategies are to develop a DFWP policy, and DFWP employee education. Education may be conducted through lunch and learns and/or providing information to all employees through a newsletter or pamphlets with their paychecks. Local substance abuse prevention and treatment providers may assist in employee training and education.

Yeah, but don’t employers do enough already, it is hard enough to run a business never mind trying to monitor our employees.

Drug Free Workplace Programs are designed to prevent alcohol and drug use from affecting businesses. Preventing substance abuse / use related workplace accidents, employee absences, and productivity issues are an advantage to a company. These are efforts to protect your company, your employees, and the company bottom line. As we have stated, low or no cost investments may save a company thousands of dollars down the line.

Yeah, but I don’t know the first thing about what I need to do to start a Drug Free Workplace Program.

The resources provided today give the employer a step-by-step process to determine what components of a Drug Free Workplace Program their company needs and can afford. From this information, they are able to develop a customized program for their business. The local, state and federal resources are available to assist the employer in this process.

Yeah, but this data can’t be right. Where are you getting this data?

All the data and resources covered today have reference citations to the original data. This and more information is available through online resources provided through the OSA

Substance Abuse and the Workplace Program website at www.maineosa.org/prevention/workplace .

Yeah, but it is none of my business what my employee does on his/her own time.

An employee that uses substances on their own time may be still be under the influence of a substance at work, or feel the after effects while at work. What risk does this place on the safety of a workplace, how productive is that employee, and how does that employee interact with co-workers and/or customers? A company needs to determine if they can afford a substance abuse related workplace accident, or an incident with a customer or a co-worker.

Yeah, but I'm the boss, not their counselor.

Correct, it is important for the company to focus on work performance and to refer employees to community counseling or Employee Assistance professionals to assess, diagnose, and/or treat the employee. Focusing on the work performance and setting up a Performance Contract with the employee, identifies tangible behaviors and outcomes for the employee. This provides the employee with clear expectations and the supervisor with what to monitor, without falling into a counseling role.

Yeah, but why not just fire an employee with a substance abuse problem.

The employer's cost of investment in an employee usually depends on the employee's skills; employee length of time with the company; and the employee's performance history. These factors assist to determine an employee's value. If this is unusual behavior for the employee then it may be more damaging to the business to fire the employee, than to do a performance contract that includes referral to assessment (possible treatment) as one of the criteria to stay employed. By firing an employee with a substance abuse problem, it does not treat the substance abuse. Rather the fired employee may seek employment elsewhere in the community and most likely, with a company that does not have a Drug Free Workplace Program. Remember, workers who reported using illicit drugs were twice as likely to have had three or more employers in the past year. By getting these individuals into treatment, it greatly increases the potential for breaking this cycle.

Yeah, but we do not need this type of policy because our company is "close knit."

Even though you consider your workplace as a "close-knit company," adopting a substance abuse policy still makes good business sense. Taking this proactive step and setting a standard shows your employees that you not only care about protecting your customer base and bottom line but also their job security. In fact, by sharing the responsibility of developing a policy with your employees you foster a greater camaraderie among your workforce.

You cannot assume that everyone who enters your worksite will act responsibly so your policy can also include vendors and other business partners. Approximately, 75% of business owners and managers of companies employing 50 or less think it is important for their company to have a written drug and alcohol workplace policy. More than half indicated that safety on the job is the most important reason to have a substance abuse policy.

WorkAlert

Vision Of Success

Small businesses in high-risk industries in Maine will have a written and enforced alcohol and drug free workplace policy. Supervisors will no longer look the other way when an employee arrives at work impaired or hung over, the culture of acceptance will begin to fade. Substance abuse information and education will be included in worksite wellness programs and there will be fewer worksite accidents, increased productivity, and improved morale. When it comes to prevention of substance abuse in the workplace, small business owners will know what to do, how to do it, and why it is relevant – they will see their involvement in this issue as vital, but easy.

Primary Objectives

Get business owners/decision makers of businesses with more than 20 employees and less than 50 that are considered at high-risk of workplace substance abuse to develop an alcohol and drug free workplace policy.

Raise the profile of substance abuse among employees and employers at identified workplaces so that alcohol and other drug use and impairment is seen as unacceptable.

2009 WorkAlert Marketing Strategies

Survey businesses

Radio Campaign

Direct Mail Post cards

Online Campaign

What you can do

Chamber outreach

Postcards for local use

Lunch and Learns

Workplace displays

Other?