



5 COSTLY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT A DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

Drug and alcohol abuse has devastating effects on families across the U.S. As seen in the current opioid epidemic sweeping the country, many businesses do not go unscathed, either. Drug and alcohol abuse during or prior to work, can negatively affect productivity, revenue, and—even worse—put your other employees in danger.

We've seen the effects firsthand, but misconceptions linger for many employers. The decision to create a drug-free workplace program should be an easy one, but these mistaken beliefs often cloud judgment on the matter. That's why we've compiled a list of the five most common misconceptions we hear when business owners create their drug-free workplace policies and program.

Workplace Safety Screenings offers a full-suite of screening services. To get started on your business' drug-free workplace program, give us a call TODAY.

Workplace Safety Screenings offers a customized, five-step drug and alcohol testing program designed to reduce turnover, increase productivity, enhance company culture, and expand profitability for your organization by reducing the costs associated with drug and alcohol abuse.

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MISCONCEPTION #1:

It's not worth the time or effort to conduct drug testing.

Here are some provocative statistics from the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD). This information was published in 2015 and the trend is worsening.

One out of every six workers in the U.S. has a drug or alcohol problem. Employees with this problem typically show these signs:

- Workers who report having three or more jobs in the previous five years are about twice as likely to be current or past-year users of illegal drugs as those who have had two or fewer jobs.
- Breathalyzer tests detected alcohol in 16% of emergency room patients injured at work.
- 70% of the estimated 14.8 million Americans who use illegal drugs are employed.

This information alone should put to rest the argument that it's not worth the time or money. A company without a drug-free workplace system in place is losing money.

In the instance of a longtime productive employee who gets injured and lands in the trap of overmedicating a policy can make all the difference. A thorough drug-free workplace program can be the safety net that catches them from a long fall to the bottom and gets a reliable employee back on track as a productive member of your team.

MISCONCEPTION #2:

Drug screening is enough. I don't need a complete drug-free workplace policy.

No. The end result of not having an effective, comprehensive drug-free workplace policy in place is that your business is left wide open to various forms of litigation, not the least of which is wrongful termination.

There is more to a drug-free workplace than drug screening. A true drug-free workplace program provides a complete, compliant, and effective system to keep your employees safe and you out of litigation. This also allows denial of unemployment benefits when terminating an employee for violation of your drug-free workplace policy. Additionally, with a good, comprehensive drug-free workplace program, you may be able to deny workers' comp benefits to an employee who tests positive for drugs or alcohol after an accident.

The gold standard for a drug-free workplace program includes a written drug-free workplace policy, supervisor and employee training, drug and alcohol testing, scientifically valid random testing program, and employee assistance program that includes a substance-abuse professional.

MISCONCEPTION #3:

Implementing a drug-free workplace is a hassle.

This does not have to be the case. Some providers can handle your program from top to bottom, including scheduling collections, selecting donors from your employee pool, doing the collection, and handling all the paperwork. The right provider can let you put your drug-free workplace program on autopilot so you can handle your business.

MISCONCEPTION #4:

Drug testing promotes employee distrust and an “us-against-them” mentality.

Some employers believe that drug testing leads to a negative work environment. The problem is not the testing but the approach the employer takes when implementing a drug and alcohol testing program. For your best employees, your program will give them peace of mind that their colleagues are reliable and will keep them safe on the job.

From WSS’ decade of experience, we find that the best approach when testing for drugs is like going through a security checkpoint. As an employer, you are not there to accuse anyone of using drugs. You are there to make sure that your workforce is not impacted by someone who may choose to endanger co-workers by coming to work impaired. Both government and private sector statistics consistently show safety-centered drug-free workplace programs that are thoughtfully planned and administered produce less tardiness, less absenteeism, and less on-the-job injuries and accidents—all of which gives you a return on your investment.

Get to know your drug-free workplace provider to understand their approach to this sensitive topic. Our experience is that proper employee education will result in buy-in from 99 percent of employees.

MISCONCEPTION #5:

The company that offers the lowest price is the company you should hire.

We’ve seen many problems arise from lowest-bid companies, suggesting you NEVER hire the company that quotes the cheapest price. A low bid often means that far fewer services, most of which are required for a successful program, are not included in the program offered. The most common issues are:

- The company may be able to collect samples and screen your employees, but if they are offering the lowest price, you can be assured the collectors are also trained at the lowest cost. Will they be DATIA and/or SAPAA certified? Will they know how to confront a suspicious donor? Will they even care to do so?
- The company collecting samples may or may not be using a lab to process the results. If they use instant tests, are they sending non-negative results to a lab for confirmation testing? All DOT testing must be lab-based and instant test results are not accepted in unemployment or worker’s compensation claim disputes. Instant (rapid) drug tests without lab confirmation are inaccurate as often as 30 percent of the time. Without an MRO, the employee has a legal claim to challenge these tests. In 9 out of 10 cases when employers are legally challenged in regards to drug tests, an MRO was not present, giving the employee a stronger case.
- The price you pay the cheapest drug screener may not be your final cost. Consider whether you will have to pull your employees off a worksite and send them to a clinic for collection. You would also likely need to send a supervisor with them. The lost work time here could be considerable. To mitigate this, one alternative is to make sure your provider can be on-site when you need them.

For more information on creating a drug-free workplace program and policy, contact the experts. Workplace Safety Screenings is available for drug and alcohol testing, program creation and management, and DOT-requirement management.