

This is the second part of a two part blog series addressing alcohol and substance abuse in the workplace and how these behaviors might negatively impact the profits and insurance rates for restaurant owners. In this blog I will address what you can and must do to protect yourself from the dangers that abusers in your workplace create.

Last week's blog was chock full of facts and figures about substance abuse by employees, but the scariest fact of all for restaurant owners is that you risk becoming the employer of choice for those abusing these substances. Larger organizations with huge budgets are learning how to filter these workers out of their employee pool and that means if you don't create filters of your own, you will be the place that these abusers go for employment. So what is a small business restaurant to do about this problem?

An effective action plan will have all of the 5 components listed below. Take the time to consider each step carefully and implement your plan with these 5 things in mind.

Put It In Writing. – Explain to all employees the need for safety and the potential problems with drug abuse on the job. Describe the prohibited behaviors and be sure to include that the use, possession, transfer or sale of illegal drugs by employees is prohibited. And spell out the consequences for failing to follow these rules. Have your employees sign that they read and understand these rules. You can see sample drug free workplace programs by visiting [Summit Holdings website](#)

Train Your Supervisors – Their job is not to diagnose substance abuse problems, but rather to monitor job performance. Your supervisors must learn to balance the individual's right to privacy and fair treatment with the fair treatment and rights of the group to a safe workplace. This is difficult but it is key that your supervisors understand exactly what you want them to do and how to do it. If you are unsure of how to proceed, seek professional help from your work comp insurance company's loss control department.

Educate Your Employees – Help your employees understand the dangers of drugs in the workplace. [The US Department of Labor](#) has tremendous resources for this.

Drug Testing – There are a variety of methods employers can use from prescreening new employees to testing employees after an accident to random testing. Again, working with a solid workers compensation company and their loss control department will help guide you in this area.

Offer An Employee Assistance Program – It is pretty expensive to hire and train a new employee so you may want to look into creating a program in your restaurant that will give your employees access to substance abuse treatment options.

Now, as an additional bit of help, check the list of warning signs below and make your supervisors aware of them.

Signs of possible drug or alcohol problems may include:

Unexplained, frequent or prolonged absences

Excuses that seem farfetched or unbelievable

Violations of safety and health procedures

Involvement in accidents, both on and off the job

Physical signs such as bloodshot or glassy eyes, dilated pupils, exhaustion or hyperactivity, unsteady walk, poor hygiene, and slurred speech.

Decline in productivity and/or erratic work patterns

Getting on top of your employee drug abuse and alcohol abuse issues quickly will help you from becoming the employer of last resort for these people. Let's face it, you are trying to make a difference and run a profitable business and these behaviors can not only cost you time and money, they have the potential to destroy your business and your reputation.

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