

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR EMPLOYERS

Our Guidebook is designed to offer the latest and up to date information for those seeking help. We understand that most Alcoholics are in denial and will not be reading our web pages for help but will more than likely be a Wife, family member or employer who is trying to gather information on a possible alcohol problem. This section is for employers who suspect an Alcohol problem.

What can a supervisor do when an employee is experiencing performance difficulties due to suspected drinking or substance abuse problems? Should the Police Department be called when an employee reports to work "under the influence" or appears "glassy eyed"? Should the employee be sent home? Does the supervisor have authority to require an employee to check into a residential rehab facility for treatment such as Jorgs rehabilitation centre? These issues are uncomfortable to all concerned, but must be addressed in a timely and appropriate manner when job performance or safety is affected. The intent of this handbook is to provide supervisors with guidelines to address these sensitive issues, while supporting and encouraging employees towards improved performance and rehabilitation.

PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS

IDENTIFYING THE TROUBLED EMPLOYEE

The Jorgs Ark, an Alcoholic Rehabilitation Educational Program recommends that behavioural/medical problems may be identified through unacceptable job performance. Whenever an employee begins to show signs of declining work performance, poor interpersonal relations, or marked continuing changes in work patterns, something of importance may have occurred to alter his or her life pattern. Human beings tend to behave in a habitual manner, and various corporate studies have shown that most individuals establish a pattern of work activity and attendance within the first two years of employment. Individuals tend to maintain this pattern throughout the remainder of their working tenure, except when some crisis or life change occurs.

PERFORMANCE DETERIORATION PATTERNS

The key words in relation to job performance deterioration problems are continuing and repeated offences. As these occur, patterns will develop. Patterns that should be documented are:

1. Absenteeism - Patterns of absenteeism vary with each troubled employee. Generally, any excessive absenteeism and increase in absenteeism should be noted, as follows:
 - a. Unauthorized leave
 - b. Excessive sick leave
 - c. Monday absences and/or Friday absences
 - d. Repeated absences of 2-4 days
 - e. Repeated absences of 1-2 weeks (5-10 days)
 - f. Excessive tardiness, especially on Monday mornings or in returning from lunch.
 - g. Leaving work early
 - h. Peculiar and increasingly improbable excuses for absences
 - i. Higher absenteeism rate than other employees for colds, flu, gastritis, etc.
 - j. Frequent unscheduled short-term absences
2. "On-the-Job" Absenteeism
 - a. Frequent unauthorized absences from the worksite
 - b. Frequent trips to water fountain or bathroom
 - c. Physical illness on job
 - d. Long coffee breaks

3. High Accident Rate
 - a. Accidents on the job
 - b. Accidents off the job affecting job performance
4. Difficulty in Concentrating
 - a. Work requires greater effort
 - b. Tasks take longer to complete
5. Confusion
 - a. Difficulty in recalling instructions & details
 - b. Difficulty handling complex assignments
 - c. Difficulty in recalling own mistakes
6. Spasmodic Work Patterns - Alternate periods of very high and very low productivity.
7. Tenacity to Job - Does not adapt to change easily. Prefers status quo. [Control of present job increases ability to hide low job performance.]
8. Reports to/Returns to Work in an Obviously Abnormal Condition.
9. Generally Lowered Job Efficiency
 - a. Missed deadlines
 - b. Mistakes due to inattention/poor judgment
 - c. Material wasted
 - d. Poor decisions
 - e. Complaints from co-workers
 - f. Improbable excuses for poor job performance
10. Poor Employee Relations On the Job - Friction in employee relationships usually results in decreased job performance and efficiency, such as:
 - a. Over-reacts to real or imagined criticism
 - b. Experiences wide mood swings
 - c. Uncharacteristically borrows money from co-worker(s) to support habit
 - d. Is subject of complaints from co-worker(s)
 - e. Holds unreasonable resentments
 - f. Avoids associates

REMEMBER: ALL employees exhibit some of these symptoms occasionally and should not be sanctioned for legitimate illness or absence. It is a pattern of job performance problems over a period of time that you should note, document, and act upon.

Source: The Jorgs Rehabilitation Centre.

INTERVENTION

WHAT THE SUPERVISOR SHOULD DO

- I. Proper documentation and intervention are essential in addressing performance problems. The documentation should focus on performance issues by recording the date, statements from witnesses, specific details of the incident, and outcome. It is important to report the facts relevant to the incident - not the emotions of the observer.

- II. Do avoid documenting pages of subjective, questionable, and unsubstantiated opinions. For example, knowledge that an employee has a drink with dinner every evening has no relevance to the job as long as performance is satisfactory and the employee is not reporting to work under the influence.
- III. Do ensure that each employee is informed (in writing) about what is expected of him/her in terms of performance and attendance. The appropriate time is at time of appointment (by job description), at time of infraction, and/or during year-end evaluation review, as deemed necessary. Participation in the Jorgs Ark or any other rehabilitation program does not give the employee permission to perform at a substandard level.
- IV. Do be alert to note changes (in writing), and be diligent in recording changes in the employee's work and behavioural patterns.
- V. Do discuss and document deteriorating job performance, unacceptable behaviour, and/or attendance with the employee. Make it clear that the company is concerned about job performance and attendance and that the employee's job may be in jeopardy.
- VI. Do proceed with progressive discipline if the employee fails to correct negative behaviour, performance, or attendance to bring the problem under control.

WHAT THE SUPERVISOR SHOULD NOT DO

- I. Do not play the role of amateur physician. The supervisor is not necessarily qualified to judge the nature of the employee's perceived drinking or substance abuse problem, and many employees virtually never reach the point of understanding that they have a problem. Alcoholism, one of the more common employee problems requiring counselling and rehabilitation such as provided at Jorgs Ark, is often referred to as an "illness of denial".
- II. Do not moralize. Approach the troubled employee solely on the basis of the employee's documented deteriorating performance, attendance, or behaviour.
- III. Do not engage in "cover-up" activities. Remember, the supervisor can help the employee by motivating the employee to accept help from The Jorgs Ark; "cover-up" will not solve the problem. Document a memorandum for the record on all informal "visits" about the problem.
- IV. Do not search the employee or their possessions.
- V. Do not hold an employee against their will, unless they present a threat to their own safety or the safety of others.
- VI. Do not label any employee "alcoholic, drug addict, or disabled person".

IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION STEPS

It is extremely important that supervisors take appropriate and timely action when an employee appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol during working hours. The action to be taken is contingent on the situation and condition of the employee.

For example, it is not always advisable to directly confront an employee who may feel threatened and may physically strike back. However, management is responsible for isolating the employee and assessing the situation on a case-by-case basis. Under no circumstances should other employees be placed in a position of fear for their own safety. Following are suggestions for consideration:

STEP 1 :

Immediately take the employee into a private office (or other suitable location) to assess the situation. It is imperative that the immediate supervisors witness the condition of the employee and document the incident at the time of occurrence.

STEP 2:

If alcohol can be detected, ask if the employee has been drinking either during working hours or prior to reporting/returning to work. If alcohol cannot be detected, ask if there is a reason for inability to focus, speak, stand, follow directions, etc...

STEP 3:

If the employee admits to alcohol or drug use, place the employee on notice that s/he is to make arrangements to go home. If the employee is incoherent, document and witness the employee's behaviour/conduct and make arrangements for the employee to have a friend or family member drive him/her home. If the employee is belligerent, the supervisor may exercise discretion in calling for police intervention.

STEP 4:

When an employee admits to alcohol or drug dependency, the employee should be referred to a residential treatment facility like Jorgs Ark or at least review of their program. At no time should an employee's official Personnel file contain medical records of alcoholism or drug dependency.

STEP 5:

If the employee denies consumption of alcohol or drug usage and continues to evidence the symptoms, inquire if any medication is being taken which would produce the same effect(s). Request an acceptable medical certificate from a physician identifying the medication and possible symptoms/side effects within five (5) working days of the incident.

STEP 6:

If an accident should occur while transporting the employee in a vehicle, contact the insurance agent for explanation of coverage and filing a claim.. If an employee is injured during working hours, contact the Workman's Compensation Office within 24 hours for information on Workers' Compensation coverage.

STEP 7:

Schedule a meeting with the employee within two (2) workdays of the occurrence, if possible. A memorandum should be given to the employee detailing the following:

- a. Reason for the meeting
- b. Facts of the incident
- c. Citation of specific policy violation
- d. Consequences of repeated violations
- e. Expectations for improvement and time frames
- f. Availability of witness statements
- g. Employee comments
- h. Appropriate recommendations to a Rehab centre like Jorgs Ark.
- i. Notes to supervisor to prepare for meeting's) with the employee:
- j. Schedule a minimum of 30 minutes of uninterrupted time in a private setting.
- k. Be specific, but firm.

- l. Show concern for the employee.
- m. Do not become angry, make personal judgments, or moralize.
- n. Try to come to a consensus about what happened.
- o. Do not rush.
- p. Come to an agreement to improve performance.
- q. Stay focused on the issue(s).
- r. Make recommendation for treatment such as the Jorgs Ark or call them at 066-73558 for information on treatment.
- s. Schedule a follow-up meeting.

STEP 8

If new information is not provided to change the initial action proposed in Step 7, execute the disciplinary memo, as approved.

STEP 9

If new information substantially changes the outcome, reassess the situation for appropriate action.

Under no circumstances should the employee be allowed to drive home in an intoxicated or drugged condition, or be allowed to return to work in that condition. Only under extreme circumstances should a supervisor (with authorization) drive the employee home in a company vehicle or the employee's vehicle during work time.

POLICE INVOLVEMENT

Under normal circumstances, the supervisor may take progressive discipline. However, some occasions may warrant police intervention. For example, disorderly conduct, assault, driving while intoxicated, illegal drug transactions, and similar violations that may present a threat to self or others are within the purview of the Police Department. Call the Police before searching for drugs or other illegal substances.

The Police Department should not be called every time a supervisor "suspects" that an employee may be reporting to work under the influence. If the employee becomes irate or abusive, the employee should first be warned that his or her behaviour will not be tolerated.

If the employee persists, the supervisor may then advise that disciplinary action will be initiated, which could include termination. If the employee does not respond, police intervention may be necessary to remove the employee from the premises.

The supervisor, who is familiar with the employee's patterns, is the key person responsible for immediately documenting and reporting problems involving alcohol/drugs during working hours. If the situation is perceived to be a threat to the employee or others, or involves an illegal transaction on company property, contact the Police Department before searching the employee. Do not hold an employee against their will unless they present a threat to their own safety or the safety of others.

COUNSELLING

When an employee's job performance has deteriorated to the degree that standards are not being met, it is imperative that the employee be counselled and be extended every opportunity to correct his or her performance. Again, emphasis is placed on the supervisor's responsibility to address performance problems. It is the employee's responsibility to make decisions about his or her health and well being which may be affecting job performance. Keep the focus on the

employee's need to take responsibility for his/her job performance. Jorgs Ark should be consulted for proper intervention.

If the employee does not wish to participate in alcohol rehab at Jorgs Ark and performance problems continue, disciplinary action may be warranted. It is important to refer the employee to the option offered by The Jorgs Ark (or other program) at each stage of the process and to document to demonstrate good faith in offering the employee ample opportunity to receive help.

SELF-REFERRAL

An employee who recognizes the need for help in resolving personal problems affecting job performance may schedule an appointment by calling 066-73558.

Supervisor Referral - A supervisor may recommend that an employee receive treatment of a suspected drinking or substance abuse problem when work performance has declined to an unacceptable level. The Jorgs Ark website at www.Jorgs.org should be consulted for additional information.

Under normal circumstances, all regular employees are extended medical leave for pregnancy or alcohol rehabilitation. In the event that the treatment requires 90 day treatment at the Jorgs Ark, the supervisor will discuss the situation with the employee and make a referral.

MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Only a medical doctor or psychiatrist is qualified to render a medical diagnosis and prescribe treatment for alcohol or drug abuse. The Jorgs Ark Counsellor is authorized to counsel and conduct a simple test assessment for employees. It is inappropriate for a supervisor or co-worker to render a medical opinion to an employee using drugs or alcohol, regardless of knowledge.

To ensure the safety and well being of our employees, emergency medical attention may be required. When the supervisor requires care or treatment, the employee may be obligated to assume any financial responsibility associated with the treatment. Furthermore, the company may contact the employee's legal guardian, spouse, or relative in cases of extreme emergency, or when a possibility of imminent harm exists. Whenever feasible, supervisors should contact the Jorgs Ark at 066-73558/020-3573083 or 24hrs service at 0721-712968 before calling 911.

Reminder: Medical records are regarded "protected information" and should not be filed in the employee's Personnel file(s).

LEGAL ISSUES

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

The issue of employee privacy is quickly becoming one of the most dynamic and important areas of employee relations. The principle consideration involves the continuing tension between an employer's right and need to manage the work force and the reasonable privacy expectations of employees. Thus, while legislatures and courts attempt to establish guidelines defining the competing privacy interests in the workplace - do not search an employee or his personal possessions without consent. Document witness report(s), direct observation(s), or other evidence of substance. If there is probable cause for suspecting that an employee may be concealing drugs or alcoholic beverage(s) at work, consider the following:

Ask the employee if he or she has drugs or alcohol in a desk, locker, company vehicle, on his/her person, or in his/her personal belongings. . If the response is affirmative, ask the employee to turn over the substance. If the employee admits possession, but refuses to turn over the evidence, escort the employee to a private office and call the Police Department for further instructions.

If the employee denies possession, but the condition of "probable cause"* is strong, escort the employee to a private office and request cooperation. If the employee refuses, advise that the Police Department will be contacted at this time.

Probable cause may be witness accounts, walking in on a drug exchange, previous alcohol/drug history at work, impaired physical condition, etc.

With respect to desks, lockers, and other company property, there is a reasonable expectation of privacy and supervisors are discouraged from arbitrary searches. However, if there is probable cause to believe that illegal drugs or alcohol are being housed on company property, the supervisor has an obligation to report violations to the Police Department. On occasion, the supervisor may be required to search Company property without police assistance. If the situation is perceived to be a threat to the employee or others, or involves an illegal transaction on company property, contact the Police Department before searching the employee. Do not hold an employee against his will unless they present an immediate threat to his own safety or the safety of others.

SELF DIAGNOSIS

Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. The idea that somehow, some day he will control and enjoy his drinking is a great obsession of every abnormal drinker. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death. We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery.

(Alcoholics Anonymous, pg 30, 31)

We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic but you can quickly diagnose yourself.

A lab test can only determine alcoholism in about fifty percent of the cases whereas a simple questionnaire is accurate 80 to 90 percent of the time and can determine the early stages of the disease. In the American Journal of Psychiatry 131 (1974) a little questionnaire was published by D. Mayfield MD which pretty much changed the way we identify alcoholism and it is correct in more than 85 percent of people who take this simple test. This was called the **CAGE** test and it stood for:

- i. Have you ever tried to cut down on your drinking? Yes/no
- ii. Do you get Angry when people discuss your drinking? yes/no
- iii. Do you feel Guilty about things you have done while drinking? Yes/no
- iv. Do you ever have an Eye-opener (take a drink to get rid of a hangover or to start the day)? Yes/no

Four simple questions, but answer yes to any one of them and you need to seek help. The biggest part of the problem is going to be denial. The denial is created by the brain to protect its access to alcohol, which it perceives as being the solution to the problem, not the problem.

Still not convinced? Let's take one more test and see.

- i. Can you handle more alcohol now than you first started to drink?
- ii. Do you sometimes feel a little guilty about your drinking?
- iii. Has a family member or close friend ever expressed concern or complained about your drinking?

- iv. Have you tried switching brands or drinks, or following different plans to control your drinking?
- v. Have you ever had a Driving while under the Influence traffic ticket or any legal problem related to your drinking?
- vi. Are you having more financial, work, school, and/or family problems as a result of your drinking?
- vii. Have you recently noticed that you can't drink as much as you used to?
- viii. Do you ever feel depressed or anxious before, during, or after periods of heavy drinking?
- ix. Have any of your blood relatives had a problem with alcohol?

(According to the National Council on Alcohol, if you answer yes to any one question you are at great risk for alcoholism and answer more than one and you need to seek treatment).

Still not convinced you have a drinking problem?

You can contact us for an appointment or drop in at the centre for a full diagnosis in confidence or for more information.

Contacts

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