A Comprehensive Guide to Establishing a Workplace Drug Testing Program
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Why drug test

Substance abuse – which includes drugs and alcohol – takes a heavy toll on businesses, costing billions of dollars in lost productivity and increased healthcare spending each year.

According to data from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 10.6 percent of full-time employees and 13.2 percent of part-time employees aged 18 or older reported using illicit drugs within the past month. Survey respondents who reported past-month drug use said they would be less likely to work for employers that conduct pre-employment or random drug testing.

Drug testing programs aim to filter out drug users and deter drug use in the workplace. Since companies first began drug testing their employees in the 1980s, drug use among workers subject to testing has steadily declined. Employers are aware of the negative impacts of workplace substance abuse including higher absenteeism, increased risk of injury and lower productivity and performance.

Studies by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) suggest that substance abuse – which includes drugs and alcohol – costs the U.S. an estimated $276 billion a year, with much of the cost resulting from lost work productivity and increased healthcare spending. Compared to the risks that hiring a drug user can introduce to your workplace, the financial cost of a drug test is rather minimal. The cost of a drug test is determined by specimen type, volume, any included collection services and Medical Review Officer (MRO) services. The cost for the collection and test of urine and oral fluid are roughly the same, although the employer can collect an oral fluid drug test. In comparison, the cost for the collection and test of a hair drug test is about twice that of urine and oral fluid. Because every business and workforce is unique, each employer should carefully determine the drug testing program elements that are most practical and beneficial for their workplace.

Survey insights

EMPLOYEES WHO USE DRUGS ARE:

- 2.5 times more likely than other non-abusing co-workers to be absent for 8 or more days each year.

EMPLOYEES WHO USE DRUGS ARE:

- 3.6 times more likely to be involved in an accident at work
- 5 times more likely to file a workers’ compensation claim.

44 percent of drug users have sold drugs to other employees.

18 percent of drug users have stolen from co-workers to support their habit.
Drug testing objectives

The overall goal is to establish a safer, more productive and drug-free work environment. As such, identifying your organization’s drug testing objectives is critical to sustaining your program’s effectiveness and is also important in helping to establish the benchmarks to measure success.

There are many benefits that employers receive from drug testing programs including:

- Improve employee productivity
- Reduce on-the-job accidents and workplace crime, including theft and violence
- Reduce employee turnover
- Decrease absenteeism
- Lower workers’ compensation insurance and healthcare costs, including premiums
- Comply with state or federal regulations

Reasons for drug testing

Understanding **when** to test is directly linked to **which** drug testing solution your organization should select. Among the following reasons for drug testing, the most common are pre-employment and random.

**Pre-employment testing** helps employers to proactively protect themselves from the negative impacts of hiring drug users. Pre-employment testing is usually performed after a conditional offer of employment has been made – a negative drug test result is required before an applicant starts working.

**Random testing**, or “spot testing,” is a strong deterrent to drug users because it is conducted on an unannounced basis. Using a random selection process, (e.g., computer-generated), an employer selects one or more individuals from all the employees included in the employer’s workplace drug testing program. By using a random selection process, employers ensure that there is no bias and that all employees have an equal chance of being selected, even those who have been drug tested recently.

**Periodic testing** is scheduled and is typically performed on current employees at consistent time periods throughout the year. Many companies choose to perform annual periodic testing – especially if employees are required to undergo an annual physical.
Post-accident testing, sometimes referred to as “post-incident” testing, is performed after an employee has been involved in a workplace accident. Testing is used to determine whether drugs were a factor in the incident. Employers who implement post-accident drug testing must establish objective criteria for how and when testing will occur. Some examples of criteria include fatalities, injuries that required medical assistance, police citations or damage to a vehicle or property above a specified monetary amount.

Reasonable suspicion testing, also known as “for-cause” testing, is performed when supervisors have evidence or reasonable cause to suspect an employee of drug use. Evidence is based upon direct observation, either by a supervisor or another employee. Specific reasons for reasonable suspicion testing include physical evidence of illicit substances, patterns of erratic or abnormal behavior, disorientation or confusion and an inability to complete routine tasks.

Return-to-duty testing is for employees who have previously tested positive for illicit substances or violated a company’s drug and alcohol policy. For both the general U.S. workforce and the federally-mandated, safety sensitive workforce, return-to-duty drug testing is a single test that is performed at a scheduled time, typically following the completion of a drug abatement program.

Follow-up testing is for employees who have previously tested positive for illicit substances or violated a company’s drug and alcohol policy. Follow-up testing is usually performed in conjunction with return-to-duty drug testing. Follow-up testing is performed after an initial return-to-duty test, and is only completed if the employee tests negative for drugs on the return-to-duty test and returns to their position.
Choosing a drug testing solution

Drug testing can detect recent use as well as a pattern of repetitive use. Your organization can determine how far back or how recently – hours, days or even months – you want to test a job candidate or employee for drug use. Employee duties can also help to determine the drug testing specimen type that you want to consider. For example, an employee working in a "safety-sensitive" role may require a different drug testing solution than an employee working in a more general setting.

The versatility of drug testing programs allows employers to design a solution that fits the organization and its specific needs. Employers have the flexibility to customize a comprehensive drug testing program with what is most appropriate for their business, industry, workforce type and location, using a broad range of testing reasons and drug test specimen types.

It is important for employers to understand that a positive drug test – even one for "recent" use – does not necessarily mean that an individual was "under the influence" at the time of the collection/test.

If you would like help sorting through all of the options, the Quest Diagnostics Drug Testing Needs Assessment asks you 10 questions and returns a solution well-suited to your needs. Take our questionnaire at EmployerSolutions.com/NeedsAssessment.

The most common specimen types for workplace drug testing

**Urine testing**

is the most common testing method with its proven methodology. It detects recent or new drug use, typically in the previous one to three days, is suitable for all testing reasons and detects the broadest variety of illicit and prescribed (i.e., prescription drugs, for which their use or misuse could impact workplace safety). It is currently the only drug testing specimen type approved for federally-regulated drug testing.

**Oral fluid testing**

is the next most common screening method used by employers and detects recent drug use in the previous 24-48 hours (24-36 hours for THC) and is suitable for a broad range of testing reasons. Unlike urine testing, oral fluid testing is primarily used to detect illicit drugs. Because collections are observed, oral fluid testing is considered a tamper-resistant drug test collection method as it’s very difficult for a donor to adulterate their specimen.

**Hair testing**

provides a much longer "detection window," giving a more complete drug-use history that would show a pattern of repetitive use as far back as up to 90 days. Like oral fluid testing, hair testing offers the benefit of an observed collection process and is not easily adulterated or substituted. It is not recommended for reasonable suspicion or post-accident testing when you want to detect drug use as closely as possible to the time of a workplace incident.

**Instant urine testing**

offers on-site drug test collections using a variety of products that provides employers rapid, reliable results when time is the most important criteria. A presumptively-positive drug test result rendered by an instant device requires confirmatory testing by a laboratory.
Drug test panels & cutoffs

There are a number of illicit drugs you can include in a drug testing program. Many employers follow the guidelines established for Federally-mandated drug testing by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and use a 5-panel test that screens for amphetamines, cocaine, marijuana, opiates and phencyclidine (PCP). Selecting what drugs to monitor in your workplace drug testing program should take into consideration regional patterns of drug use, job type, employee demographics and drug testing benefits and limitations.

Understanding the drug testing process and cutoffs

In workplace drug testing, the industry standard process involves two-tiered testing – an initial screen on one portion of the specimen, followed by a confirmatory test for a positive screen on a second portion of the original specimen. The initial test is designed to separate negative specimens from further consideration. The confirmatory test uses definitive methods, such as chromatography-mass spectrometry (e.g., GC-MS, LC-MS/MS), that specifically identify and quantify the drug/metabolite in the specimen. Drug testing detects the presence of drugs and drug metabolites using cutoff levels to determine whether a specimen tests positive or negative for the use of a specific drug.

Cutoff levels are expressed in nanograms (ng) per milliliter (mL) for urine and oral fluid testing and picograms (pg) per milligram (mg) for hair testing. It is important to select a specimen type and cutoff level based on the desired window of detection and any regulatory requirements. Only when a drug or drug metabolite is identified at a concentration equal to or above the administrative cutoff is a specimen reported by the laboratory as positive. Consequently, a negative drug test does not necessarily mean that no drug is present. While that may be the case, other possible interpretations are that a drug was present below the cutoff or the testing panel did not include the drug the individual was using.

Drugs tested

Quest Diagnostics commonly tests for the use of the following illicit and prescription drugs:

- Amphetamine
- Barbiturates
- Benzodiazepines
- Cocaine
- Codeine
- Heroin
- Hydrocodone
- Hydromorphone
- Marijuana
- MDMA (Ecstasy)
- Methadone
- Methamphetamine
- Morphine
- Opiates
- Oxycodone
- Oxymorphone
- PCP
- Propoxyphene
- Steroids

Synthetic Drugs
- Synthetic cannabinoids (e.g., “K2/Spice”)
- Synthetic stimulants (e.g., “Bath Salts”)
Drug testing trends

Employers rely on data from the Quest Diagnostics Drug Testing Index™ (DTI) to better understand workplace drug testing trends. The strengths of the Drug Testing Index analysis include its large sample size of millions of workplace drug tests, the longitudinal nature of the monitoring, a testing population that is generally reflective of the U.S. workforce and the quality of the drug testing services to confirm positive test results. Quest Diagnostics publishes its findings annually as a public service for government, business and industry, policymakers and the general public. For data and analysis, visit QuestDiagnostics.com/DTI.

Substance use and abuse by industry

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health’s NSDUH CBHSQ 2015 Report summarized data gathered between 2008 and 2012 about illicit drug abuse by industry. The NSDUH defines illicit drugs to include “marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, and prescription-type drugs used nonmedically.” The industries with the highest rate of past month illicit drug use included workers employed full-time in the accommodations and food services industry (19.1%); arts, entertainment and recreation (13.7%); management of companies and enterprises, administration, support (12.1%); information (11.7%); and construction (11.6%). Additional industries with workers reporting past month illicit drug use include retail, manufacturing, real estate, mining utilities and other service-oriented industries. Alternatively, lower rates of illicit drug abuse were observed in industries such as education, healthcare, public administration and social assistance. Visit samhsa.gov/data/ for data and reports from SAMHSA.
Employers can complete certain types of drug test collections themselves at their place of employment. Other employers prefer that a trained, professional collector complete the collection at a nearby site equipped with the necessary supplies and forms. Criteria to consider for drug test collections include the convenience of collection site locations, hours of operation and training for you or the collector. The Quest Diagnostics drug test collection site network consists of more than 8,000 locations across the United States. Our trained collectors follow standardized processes at our locations to help to ensure your donor receives a consistent, high-quality experience. Strict chain of custody procedures are followed at every step of the process to help control the integrity of drug test specimens and final drug test results.

Optimized logistics and a national footprint help to shorten the distance that drug test specimens need to travel in order to be tested, speeding up the process. Disaster recovery plans minimize disruptions in laboratory operations in the event of weather, a natural disaster or other infrastructure issues. As a result, our network of laboratories allows for nearly seamless drug testing operations.
Laboratory accreditations and inspections are a way to ensure accurate and reliable drug testing and help verify that processes, instrumentation and lab personnel adhere to critical standards of excellence and quality. There are two national programs that certify or accredit laboratories: the National Laboratory Certification Program (NLCP), which is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (HHS/SAMHSA); and the College of American Pathologists Forensic Drug Testing (FDT) accreditation program. Both of these programs use proficiency testing and onsite inspections to assess laboratory compliance with their program requirements. Certification under the NLCP is required for testing Federal employees or for the Federally-mandated testing of private sector employees (e.g., DOT-mandated testing of drivers and pilots).

Many states also require certification under one of these programs for a laboratory to perform employment-related drug tests. In New York state, certification by the Department of Health is also required. The laboratories in the Quest Diagnostics Employer Solutions business that perform employment-related drug tests are certified under both the NLCP and FDT programs. These laboratories also maintain all applicable state licensing and certification including New York Department of Health and Florida’s Agency for Health Care Administration. The specific licensure held in each laboratory is dependent on location and testing performed.

**Value of an accurate test**
Drug testing policy

Employers must address substance abuse in an effort to keep their workplaces healthy, safe and drug-free. A comprehensive, clearly-written drug and alcohol testing program can be effective at deterring workforce drug use. The policy should be current and comply with all relevant federal and state laws, considering all parameters and procedures. Emphasize your company’s commitment to a drug-free work environment for all your employees using direct, to the point language. If your policy is clear and strong, it effectively defines the consequences if its parameters are violated. Always consult a licensed attorney when writing or revisiting your drug and alcohol substance abuse policy.

Drug testing program administration
Communicate about your substance abuse policy on an ongoing basis. Employee education and awareness programs can help encourage cooperation from your workforce. Informative communication also helps employees understand their rights and responsibilities, the consequences for violating the policy and the available resources such as an employee assistance program (EAP) if assistance is needed.

Supervisor training
Supervisors and leaders should be aware of the warning signs of drug abuse and their roles in maintaining a drug-free workplace. Management should know how to objectively recognize, document and report a potential substance abuse problem in accordance to the company’s policy. In addition, they should know how to refer an employee to get assistance or treatment and what to do when that employee returns to work after getting help. Lastly, the drug and alcohol substance abuse policy should be applied universally to all employees across the company’s workforce to eliminate the notion of inequitable or unfair practices.

State laws
All 50 states allow for drug testing of job applicants and employees. Yet, a handful of states have unique requirements and limitations about what is legal for workplace drug testing. For example, Hawaii, Vermont and Puerto Rico (U.S. territory) prohibit the use of oral fluid drug testing. Compliance with state laws can help your company to reduce its exposure to legal liability. In some states, companies can qualify for a discount on workers’ compensation insurance premiums, which can help to subsidize the cost of drug testing. Therefore, having thorough knowledge of all applicable state laws and working with a licensed attorney is imperative when building and administering your drug testing program.
Using Medical Review Officer services

A Medical Review Officer (MRO) is a licensed physician responsible for receiving laboratory results generated by a drug testing program and evaluating possible medical explanations for certain drug test results. An MRO independently and confidentially reviews the drug testing process and provides clarification when a drug test result is returned as positive, adulterated, substituted or invalid. This is an important component of the drug testing process to help ensure compliance and accuracy. MRO review is required for all Federally-regulated drug testing as well as by some states under specified circumstances.

Results reporting

A wide range of reporting options are available for drug tests performed at a Quest Diagnostics laboratory. We deliver results through an online drug testing portal, web services, human resources and applicant tracking system integration, fax and telephone interactive voice response (IVR). We also offer helpful tools like collection site matches, at-lab status checks and access to drug testing forms and images. Overall, our technology helps to simplify the drug testing process with online solutions that can be seamlessly integrated with your workflow.

Education and resources

Staying up-to-date with current drug testing news and information is important. Organizations such as the Drug and Alcohol Testing Industry Association (DATIA) and the Substance Abuse Program Administrators Association (SAPAA) work to educate, train and keep you informed about current trends in the drug and alcohol testing industry. Quest Diagnostics also offers free webinars, online specimen collection training and resources such as our drug testing blog and monthly newsletter. If you are curious about the costs associated with drug use in the workplace, the Quest Diagnostics Drug Testing ROI Calculator can tabulate a personalized report to help detail the value of workplace drug testing. For more information, visit EmployerSolutions.com/ROI/QD.
### Comparing drug testing solutions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lab-based urine</th>
<th>Lab-based oral fluid</th>
<th>Lab-based hair</th>
<th>Instant urine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug detection window</td>
<td>Detects recent drug use 24-72 hours</td>
<td>Detects recent drug use 24-48 hours</td>
<td>Detects a pattern of repetitive drug use up to 90 days</td>
<td>Detects recent drug use 24-72 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for testing</td>
<td>Suitable for all testing reasons</td>
<td>Suitable for all testing reasons, especially post-accident and reasonable suspicion</td>
<td>Pre-employment, random, return to duty and follow-up testing</td>
<td>Scenarios that require rapid drug test results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of collection</td>
<td>Not observed (restroom facilities required)</td>
<td>Observed – making donor cheating difficult</td>
<td>Observed – making donor cheating difficult</td>
<td>Not observed (restroom facilities required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection</td>
<td>Collection site</td>
<td>At the employer's location or at a collection site</td>
<td>Collection site</td>
<td>At the employer's location or at a collection site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug testing site</td>
<td>Laboratory</td>
<td>Laboratory</td>
<td>Laboratory</td>
<td>At the point of collection (positive results must be confirmed by lab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs tested</td>
<td>Comprehensive test panel options</td>
<td>Primarily illicit and some prescription drugs</td>
<td>Primarily illicit and some prescription drugs</td>
<td>Limited number of drug panel configurations*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results turnaround time</td>
<td>Negative results within 24-36 hours of receipt at the lab</td>
<td>Negative results within 24-36 hours of receipt at the lab</td>
<td>Negative results within 24-36 hours of receipt at the lab</td>
<td>Negative results within minutes depending on device and reporting mechanism*</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Quest Diagnostics offers Express Results™ Online, an instant, urine drug testing solution that screens for up to 11 drug/drug combinations. Negative results are available within minutes from the time of collection.*
Choosing a drug testing laboratory

Consider the availability of the following criteria when selecting a provider:

- Reputation for quality and accuracy
- Drug testing expertise and resources available to answer your technical, legal and logistical questions
- Range of available drug testing specimen types and solutions
- Network of SAMHSA-certified laboratories
- Confirmation testing when initial drug testing renders a non-negative result
- Specimen validity testing and adulterant identification
- Fast turnaround times for results
- Multiple choices of confidential results reporting options
- Storage of non-negative drug test specimens in the event of a challenge requiring a specimen re-test
- Ability to interface with a large number of Medical Review Officers
- Collection sites within a convenient radius of your company location and employees
- Online appointment scheduling
- Options for 24/7 emergency collections and on-site drug test collections
- Random drug testing services
- Electronic Custody and Control Form (CCF) options
- Customer support available
- Competitive pricing

If your company’s goal is to create a workplace where productivity is not hampered by the potential pitfalls and distractions of accidents, absenteeism and low performance due to employee drug use, then a comprehensive drug and alcohol testing program is an excellent option. With the right plan in place, your company can accurately and reliably screen job applicants and employees and maintain a drug-free workplace with the processes, certifications/accreditations, range of services and experience backed by an industry leader – Quest Diagnostics.
References

We’re there when you need us™
EmployerSolutions.com | 800.877.7484