# The Importance of Drug Testing
## Promote a Safe Workplace

One of the major issues impacting the workplace is the use of alcohol and drugs. A recent study conducted by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) revealed that nearly one in 10 full-time workers in the United States has had a recent substance abuse problem.

According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), marijuana is the most commonly used and abused illegal drug by employees, followed by cocaine, with prescription drug use steadily increasing.

**Valuable Statistics:**

- 67.9% of all adult illegal drug users are employed full or part time. (Source: 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings.)
- 70% of the estimated 14.8 million Americans who use illegal drugs are employed and drug abuse costs employers $81 billion annually (Source: the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD))

Regardless of business size, it's important to be aware of the effects of substance abuse at work. Research has shown that alcohol and drug abuse by employees places a considerable burden on employers:

- absenteeism, tardiness, illness
- loss of productivity and performance
- employee turnover
- theft/embezzlement
- lower morale
- unsafe working conditions
- incidents of crime/violence
- higher rate of healthcare/medical expenses
- increased number of workers' compensation and disability claims



- Intoxication on the job affecting productivity, and causing accidents
- After-effects of substance use (hangover, withdrawal) affecting job performance
- Medical/psychological morbidity caused by chronic substance use causing absenteeism, illness, reduced productivity
- Preoccupation with obtaining and using substances while at work interfering with attention and concentration
- Illegal activities in the workplace, including selling illicit drugs to other employees
- Psychological or stress-related effects due to substance abuse by a family member, friend, or "significant other" affecting job performance

The concern with workplace drug-related issues is often supported by the increasing prevalence of drug use and its negative effect on an organization's bottom line. According to the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, small and medium sized firms employ 80% of the U.S. workforce where drug testing policies and programs aren't in place. Absenteeism, increased health care costs and decreased productivity due to alcohol and other substance abuse cost companies $1,000 per employee annually.
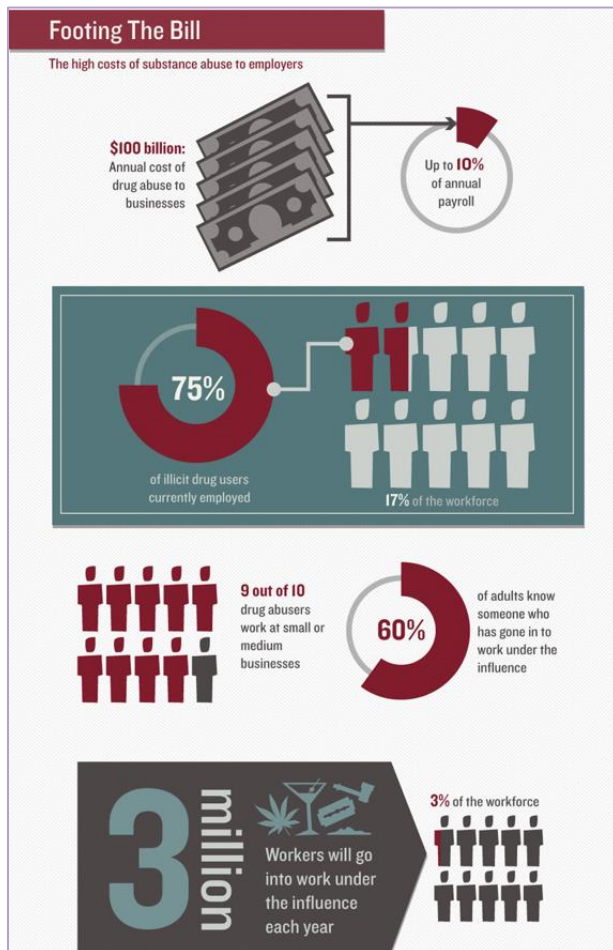
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## Footing The Bill

The high costs of substance abuse to employers

**$100 billion:** Annual cost of drug abuse to businesses

Up to **10%** of annual payroll

**75%** of illicit drug users currently employed

**17%** of the workforce

**9 out of 10** drug abusers work at small or medium businesses

**60%** of adults know someone who has gone in to work under the influence

**3 million** Workers will go into work under the influence each year

**3%** of the workforce

Image Source: Risk Management Monitor

**Why drug testing is important:**

- Alcohol and drug abuse is regarded to be among the most common health hazards in the workplace.

- Organizations with drug-free workplace programs sometimes qualify for state government incentives or insurance premium (such as worker's compensation) discounts.

- It provides employers with the tools to help ensure the safety of all workers and any other people who may be affected by the actions of the employer.

- Employers can help prevent workplace drug use.

For the many short and long term benefits of a drug-free workplace, more employers are implementing drug testing programs as a powerful risk management tool and cost-effective means to promote a positive and safe work environment; in addition to helping reduce the unfavorable effects that drug use can have on an organization.

According to a survey conducted by the Hazelden Foundation, more than sixty percent of adults know people who have gone to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol. A drug testing program can be the cornerstone of establishing a safe and productive workplace. When creating a policy it should include:

- A well designed, written substance abuse policy
- Access to assistance and resources for help
- Employee education
- Supervisor training

It is always recommended that employers seek legal counsel to assist in creating a comprehensive workplace drug testing program and one that complies with any applicable federal, state and local laws.

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