



# Addressing Employees with a Substance Use Disorder

As a manager, you play a powerful role in the lives of your employees by understanding the dynamics of substance use. It is important to learn the signs so that if a worker is misusing drugs or alcohol, you will recognize the problem and have the ability to offer help.

Symptoms of drug or alcohol use may be physical (i.e. smell of the substance, sweating, weight loss, physical deterioration), emotional (i.e. increased aggression, anxiety, burnout, denial, depression, paranoia), and/or behavioral (i.e. excessive talking, impaired coordination, irritability, lack of energy, limited attention span, poor motivation).

While different types of drugs produce different physical symptoms or behaviors, there are numerous ways misuse may affect work behavior — and ultimately job performance and safety. It could be a sign of drug or alcohol misuse if a worker is:

- Arriving late, leaving early and/or often absent
- Unreliable and away often
- Careless, repeatedly making mistakes
- Argumentative and uncooperative
- Unwilling or unable to follow directions
- Avoiding responsibilities
- Making unbelievable excuses and placing blame on others
- Taking unnecessary risks, ignoring health and safety policies
- Frequently responsible for damage to equipment or property
- Frequently involved in mishaps and accidents

It is important to note that if an employee displays these signs, it does not necessarily mean he or she has a drug or alcohol problem, but the possibility should not be overlooked.

For more resources about recovery, visit our Substance Use Disorders Center.

[#SupportSobriety](#)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**

**National Helpline — Dial 1-800-662-4357**