

Reducing the risk of workplace alcohol problems

Alcohol misuse can impact on workplaces in a number of ways, including relationships, safety and productivity. Alcohol misuse can also affect the general health and wellbeing of employees, and impact on co-workers, families, friends and the wider community.

Alcohol affects a person's concentration, decision-making ability and slows reaction times. These effects can have implications for workplace safety, especially if the work involves operating heavy machinery or driving a vehicle. If a person comes to work hung-over or is absent due to alcohol, co-workers may become resentful of having to cover for them.

This fact sheet outlines some of the ways employers can minimise the impact of alcohol in the workplace.

Developing a workplace response to alcohol issues

Effective responses to alcohol in the workplace should be tailored to suit the needs and situation of the individual workplace and incorporate policy, education, training, counselling and treatment.

Developing a policy

A workplace alcohol policy is a written document that should aim to provide the basis for the workplace's alcohol culture. It should include:

- A statement outlining the workplace's position on alcohol
- A set of guidelines, strategies and processes for addressing alcohol-related issues in the workplace and achieving these objectives
- The roles and responsibilities of the employer, workplace, managers/supervisors, those who implement the policy, and employees.

"Considering the length of time that people spend at work, the workplace is ideally situated to change the attitudes and behaviour in regards to workers alcohol use¹".

Education and training

Education and training programs are not only effective ways of ensuring all employees are aware of the workplace's alcohol policy, but can also contribute to the health and wellbeing of employees by providing information about:

- Alcohol-related harm in the workplace
- Alcohol and its impact on health and wellbeing
- Access to counselling and other treatment.

The provision of ongoing, relevant education and training programs plays an essential role in changing attitudes and behaviours relating to alcohol use and the workplace.

Treatment

Access to treatment such as counselling is an important component of any workplace response to alcohol. There are a variety of treatment options that employers and employees can use. For example:

- Employee assistance programs (EAPs)
- Private alcohol and drug treatment services
- Community-based alcohol and drug treatment programs.

Accessing counselling and other treatment services may be compulsory when employees breach the conditions of the workplace alcohol policy; however, employees should also be provided with the opportunity to access these services voluntarily.

If you're worried about an employee's drinking, contact the alcohol and other drug service in your state or territory.

¹ Australian Safety and Compensation Council. (2007). *Work-related alcohol and drug use: A fit for work issue*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Factsheet

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ALCOHOL AND DRUGS
IN THE WORKPLACE

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