Workplaces and Substance Use

Non-Safety-Sensitive Positions*

POLICIES & TRAINING

> I like our policies because they focus on being fit for work, which focuses on all substances both legal and illegal. — *Study participant*

Policies vary in which substances managers said they address

- **71%** Alcohol
- **64%** Medical cannabis
- **63%** Recreational cannabis
- **46%** Medications
- **70%** Illegal drugs

About 5 in 10 managers reported policies or procedures exist on how to:

- **Intervene** when an employee might be using alcohol or other drugs, or be impaired.
- **Accommodate** employees affected by alcohol or drug use issues.
- **Manage employees who return** to work after having left due to alcohol or drug use.

Policies are not perfect. Among 3 in 10 managers who reported that policies exist reported that they …

- Are **not followed** by employees.
- Are **not enforced** by management.

And about 2 in 10 reported that they …

- Are **not designed well** (e.g., may be confusing, discriminatory).
- Seem to **violate** individual **privacy**.

Having policies or training does not mean they are appropriate or effective. In a 2018 **Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction** study, few organizations were found to have substance use policies that were comprehensive, non-stigmatizing or provided supports.

Among managers who reported policies exist, about **6 in 10 reported training exists** on those policies.

But about **6 in 10** of those managers **DO NOT think** they have been **adequately trained** to intervene with an employee they think might be impaired.

> Empower employees who have recovered from addictions to help design policies and procedures. — *Study participant*

Lack of policies and training on substance use issues:

- May expose organizations to human rights violations;
- May mean managers are less likely to know how to manage a situation; and
- Could increase health and safety risks for the organization.

Some businesses have improved approaches to managing substance use risks, such as developing comprehensive policies, training staff, offering accommodations, fostering peer support programs, and setting up mental and substance use health supports.

Contact us at workplace@ccsa.ca for training or for more information and resources such as our trades toolkit.

Background: The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction conducted a national study about workplace policies and practices related to substance use and working in various industries. The information presented here is from employees and managers in non–safety-sensitive positions who participated in a survey and focus groups, and individuals affected by substance use.

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*Non–safety-sensitive positions pose low or no risk to self, co-workers, the public or the environment (e.g., office staff, retail clerks, bank managers).

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