

Workplaces and Substance Use

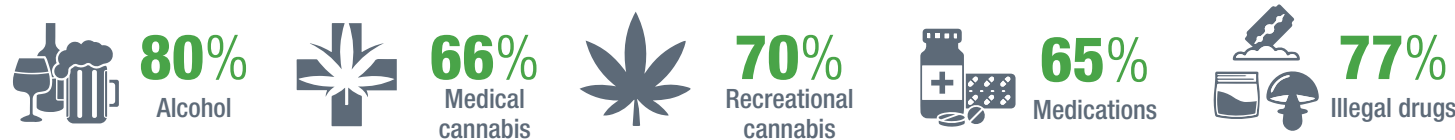
Safety-Sensitive Positions*



POLICIES & TRAINING

“ ... I think we should promote them [policies] more regularly so that employees know about them. At the moment, we’re using our judgment, our common sense. — Study participant ”

Policies vary in which substances they address



About 6 in 10 managers reported policies or procedures exist on how to:



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



Policies are not perfect. Among managers who reported that policies exist, about 4 in 10 reported that they:

- Are **not followed** by employees.
- Are **not designed well** (e.g., may be confusing, discriminatory).

And about 3 in 10 report that policies ...

- Are **not enforced** by management.
- Seem to **violate** individual **privacy**.



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



But about **4 in 10** of those managers **DO NOT think** they have been **adequately trained** to intervene with a worker they think might be impaired.



We should be doing refreshers about the policies on a regular basis. There should also be more effort put towards sensitizing employees about the risks of substance use and working with diminished faculties.

— Study participant



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.



Lack of policies and training on substance use issues:

- May expose organizations to human rights violations;
- Means 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 workers and managers in safety-sensitive positions who participated in a survey and focus groups, and individuals affected by substance use.

Suggested citation: Meister, S., Barker, B., Dassieu, L., Wood, S., Beirness, D., & Cragg, S. (2025). *Substance use and the workplace — policies and training: Safety-sensitive positions* [Infographic]. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction.

*Safety-sensitive positions pose potential risks to self, co-workers, the public or the environment (e.g., airline pilots, heavy equipment operators, medical practitioners).