



Workplace *Wellness* Program

Drugs – Illegal and Prescription/Over the Counter

Recent media reports continue to provide comment on the prevalence of drugs in our society. Unfortunately the construction industry is again, as with alcohol consumption, considered a high risk area for excessive drug use by industry participants.

The term 'drugs' includes both prescription and over the counter medications as well as illegal drugs.

Workers have an obligation to take 'reasonable care' and can only do so when they understand the effects that impairment from drugs can have on their own health but importantly – the safety of their fellow workers.

It is essential that all people at the workplace are aware that drugs may also impact on their ability to work safely and may affect the safety of others.

As a business owner you are obligated to provide a safe work environment for your staff under the WHS Act. We have already provided information surrounding the implementation of policies and procedures into your business relating to alcohol to ensure the safety on site of ALL workers in the landscaping industry.

Therefore it is also vital that employers provide information, instruction and training in relation to this topic as with any other hazards and risks.

Once again, having policies and procedures in place covering this area and making employees aware of this on a regular basis will assist you to discharge your obligations.

Although the culture in each workplace is different, workplaces will have similar goals for initiating drug and alcohol policies. They will eliminate or reduce the adverse effects on productivity and ensure they fulfil their legal obligations to ensure a safe working environment for all. The policies will also address similar issues including the need to ensure that all employees are aware that:

- ❖ Drug and alcohol use can be a problem
- ❖ The processes for intervention are confidential; and
- ❖ There is access to treatment

Various medications come with warning labels suggesting people taking them can become drowsy or otherwise affected. A warning not to drive or operate machinery whilst taking the medication is often noted but impairment could also present as difficulty in concentration, slowed reaction times and decreased physical coordination – all of which are safety risks on a job site.

Safeguards

Employers should encourage employees to advise them when they are taking medication that may affect their abilities allowing employers the opportunity to move them to other duties however it must be noted that it is NOT relevant for the employer to ask WHY the employee is taking the medication.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

Although people with severe problems are generally referred to specialist alcohol and other drug agencies, EAPs are commonly used for the initial counselling and assessment services for people with alcohol or/and drug problems.

EAPs generally aim to provide easy access to counselling and training services for employees and to provide support and training for supervisors and management. They generally offer counselling and other services for a number of issues including family and relationship problems, financial problems and career counselling. They can facilitate referrals for diagnosis, treatment and assistance, case monitoring and follow up services. EAPs are easily accessible for employees and provide a confidential service.

For a list of some providers of this service in Queensland visit - http://www.eapaa.org.au/index.php/providers/provider_qld/ or contact Landscape Queensland.

Useful Contacts to Encourage Workers to Address Alcohol and Drug use

- ❖ Promote the Alcohol and Drug Information Service phone 1800 177 833
- ❖ Promote [Counselling Online](#) phone 1800 888 236
- ❖ Provide information on confidential counselling through workplace employee assistance programs
- ❖ Promote 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) a 24/7 phone service for health advice and information about health services
- ❖ Encourage employees to discuss issues with their general practitioner

Our next edition will begin a series on the final high risk health topic – nutrition which will also include information on sun safe policies at work.

Parts of this information were reproduced from:

www.commerce.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/atoms/files/alcohol_and_drugs_0.pdf

www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/SWA/about/Publications/Documents/334/WorkRelatedAlcoholAndDrugUse_AFitForWorkIssue_2007_PDF.pdf

<http://workplaces.healthier.qld.gov.au/public-resources/health-topics-ideas-for-action/alcohol-and-other-drugs/>

www.adf.org.au/workplace-services-microsite/line-manager-training84

For more information visit www.landscapequeensland.com.au/healthier-happier-workplaces

Landscape Queensland is working with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland on a Healthy Workers Initiative as part of the Queensland Government's Healthier.Happier.Workplaces.Initiative.

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