

PATTERNS OF DETERIORATING PERFORMANCE

Substance abuse can affect an employee's job performance in many ways. Supervisors need to be alert to and document the following if they appear as part of a pattern and not isolated incidents.

GENERAL TRENDS:

- Excessive absenteeism; peculiar excuses for absences;
- Excessive use of sick leave, particularly for minor illnesses such as colds, flu or stomach problems;
- Frequent absences on Fridays, Mondays, or after holidays;
- Excessive tardiness;
- Long breaks; frequent trips to the bathroom, break area or parking lot and frequent early departure from work;
- Higher than normal accident rates, both on and off the job;
- Changes in appearance, such as flushed face, red or blurry eyes, carelessness in dress or appearance, hand tremors;
- Needle marks on the arms.

PERFORMANCE RELATED TRENDS:

- Inconsistent work patterns or disruption of work patterns;
- Decreasing reliability; procrastination; memory gaps;
- Tendency to neglect details formerly not neglected;
- Friction with co-workers; placing blame on others;
- Making consistently bad decisions; missing deadlines;
- Requesting different job assignments;
- Seeking loans from co-workers;
- Wasting office supplies or materials due to errors;
- Poor service to the public; complaints from the public;
- Lack of cooperation; confusion;
- Decreased productivity or quality of work;
- Morale problems; unacceptable behavior.

Obviously there are other explanations for such trends, and supervisors should be cognizant of this. Supervisors are not to jump to conclusions and should use good judgement.

Documentation of these patterns of deteriorating work performance is extremely important to the drug/alcohol screening process. These records provide the basis for supervisors to take appropriate action including disciplinary action or requiring drug/alcohol testing.

Document actual events and observations, rather than hearsay. Good work should be documented as well as poor performance. Documentation should include specific dates, times, people involved, behavior, reactions, overall performance and a general discussion of circumstances. Information of medical diagnoses, conclusions about medical conditions or opinions about the cause of the observed behavior should not be included.

During a counseling session, the supervisor should not diagnose the employee's problem, but point out where and how the employee's work performance or attendance has deteriorated. No mention of the employee being an alcohol or drug abuser should be made during these counseling sessions. Care should be taken that statement that could be construed as defamation of character are not made. The employee should be provided suggestions as to how to improve the employee's work performance and attendance to a satisfactory level. Employee's should be encouraged to self-refer to the Employee Assistance Program to deal with situations which are affecting the employee's work performance or attendance.