

There are many personal challenges and struggles that may impact employee performance, including difficulty with health, childcare, familial relationships, transportation and finances. Managers are often unaware of these challenges until it starts to affect employee performance. It is important to understand that your role as a manager is not to diagnose and treat your employee, but rather constructively address the performance issues and offer possible solutions that may best help the employee succeed. As a manager it is important that you are prepared and comfortable to address employee performance issues in a consistent manner, regardless of the root cause. [SAMHSA's Guidelines for Supervisors](#) contains valuable information to ensure that managers are prepared to have these difficult conversations.

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1. Know the Organization's Policy and Program

As a manager it is important that you are familiar with your organization's Drug and Alcohol policy. The more you understand your role, the more comfortable you will be managing the situation.

2. Be Aware of Legally Sensitive Areas

Some industries are required to follow federal protocols around drug and alcohol use in the workplace. It is important that you understand and be prepared for legally sensitive issues that may arise. It would be wise consult with employment attorney and familiarize yourself with the following federal laws:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

- Drug-free Workplace Act of 1988

3. *Recognize Potential Problems*

There are many instances in the workplace when a manager observes changes in his/her employee. Addressing these behaviors early on can improve the employee's chances of changing the behavior before it becomes a disciplinary matter. Potential problems you may notice include:

- Regular tardiness
- Unplanned absenteeism
- Ongoing performance issues
- Less engagement
- Behavioral concerns

Refer to Manager Tip Sheet Sample Scenarios in the Employer Resource Library for further detail.

4. *Document*

It is important to document any behaviors that an employee is demonstrating that you are concerned about. Be sure to document date, time and context. Be descriptive and factual as possible. Be sure to avoid including your opinions, thoughts and assumptions.

5. *Act*

Being prepared, knowing your role and understanding your goal when addressing performance issues with an employee can help ensure that the conversation with the employee is constructive. If possible it can be a good idea to seek guidance from your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help you prepare. SAMHSA suggests the following framework when having this discussion:

- Identify employee's strengths
- Clearly describe the performance issue (as documented and provide a copy for employee)
- Discuss and describe performance expectations
- Keep discussion focused on job performance/attendance
- Identify supervisory support to help the employee improve performance/attendance
- Offer referrals to EAP or other resources to address issues that are affecting performance
- Identify a time frame for another meeting to review progress

6. Refer to Appropriate Programs

It is helpful for you to know what benefits your company provides for its employees. Some benefits that many employers offer include: Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), Concierge Programs, Child/Eldercare Programs and Coaching Programs. This is a good time for you to give your employee various supports that might be available to the employee so he/she can improve his/her performance.

7. Reintegrate

SUD is a progressive, chronic disease in which many employees experience at various stages. Employers should be aware that, under limited conditions, employees with a history of substance use disorders are covered by the ADA and are afforded certain reasonable accommodations. As noted above, employers should be familiar with those provisions of the ADA. It is important that employers support their employees who are in recovery by offering the following:

- Ongoing education on SUD
- Flex work hours/work from home options to accommodate appointments
- On-site support groups for employees
- Workplace and social functions that are not held in alcohol-centric facilities