

Supervisor' guide: Alcohol and drug awareness for supervisors

Supplementary information

Canadian Model for Providing a Safe Workplace – Version 6.0 – July 1, 2018

The purpose of the Canadian Model for Providing a Safe Workplace (Canadian Model) is to contribute to a safe workplace for all workers by reducing the risks associated with the inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs. This supplementary information is intended to help create awareness and enhance understanding of the Canadian Model. If there is any lack of clarity or apparent conflict between the supplementary information and the Canadian Model, the terms of the Canadian Model Version 6.0 shall prevail. For more information, visit coaa.ab.ca and EnergySafetyCanada.com.

Introduction

Background

As individuals, we hold varying opinions about the use and the personal or societal impact of alcohol and drugs, and we make our lifestyle choices accordingly. Regardless of our opinions, the fact is that an individual's mental and physical abilities are adversely affected by alcohol and drugs. That fact presents an obvious and real concern for companies in the Canadian construction, maintenance, and oil and gas industries regarding the safe operation of their enterprises. These companies are committed to providing a safe workplace for all their workers, at all times and in all situations.

As part of the construction, maintenance, and oil and gas industries' commitment to safety, new and revised standard alcohol and drug guidelines have been introduced, called the Canadian Model for Providing a Safe Workplace (the Canadian Model). Construction, maintenance, and oil and gas companies across Canada are implementing these standard guidelines for all their workers and operations.

Roles and responsibilities of supervisors and leaders

The successful implementation of the Canadian Model is the shared responsibility of owner companies, contractors, workers and labour providers. As part of this responsibility, supervisors and leaders must:

- Be knowledgeable about and comply with the company's alcohol and drug work rule and procedures
- Ensure they comply with work standards as part of their responsibility to perform their work-related activities in an effective and safe manner
- Be knowledgeable about the use of alcohol and drugs and be able to recognize the symptoms of the use of alcohol and drugs
- Understand the company's performance management policy and how the Canadian Model is integral to that policy
- Take action on performance deviations
- Take action on reported or suspected alcohol or drug use by workers
- Complete supervisor awareness training in accordance with the minimum criteria set by the United States Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) – Employer Guidelines.

Importance of education

Worker awareness of the actual and potential risks, both on and off the job, related to the consumption or use of alcohol or drugs is very important. Education and communication are the vehicles through which we can bring this awareness to all people engaged on our work sites. In fact, awareness and education are the principal methods our industry is utilizing to ensure compliance with the Canadian Model by all

workers. By everyone complying with the standards defined in this policy, we can achieve our goal of eliminating workplace health and safety concerns associated with non-compliance.

As a supervisor, you have a very key role and responsibility in bringing this education alive on the work site with your work crews. By investing in the education of the people you are responsible for in the workplace and ensuring they understand the standards contained in the Canadian Model as well as the risks and dangers associated with alcohol and drug use, you will have gone a long way to achieving the necessary policy compliance. In the long run, this makes your job as a supervisor easier and meaningfully contributes to the success of ensuring a safe workplace.

Many opportunities exist that can help to ensure effective education and learning occurs in the workplace. While education can take place formally, such as in a classroom or a structured meeting, it will also very frequently happen through less formal means. For example, excellent opportunities arise when orienting new employees to their work areas. Other examples include tool box meetings and safety meetings. Leading by personal example is also a powerful means of education. Good supervisors are respected and looked at as a model of behaviour, especially by apprentices. Supervisors must demonstrate behaviours that are consistent with the standards defined in the Canadian Model.

As a first principle, it is important to realize that the policy applies to all employees, regardless of whether a worker has problems relating to the use of alcohol or drugs. This understanding will avoid exclusively targeting workers who have substance abuse problems. Additionally, in communicating the intent of the policy to workers, it is helpful to emphasize that, in the first instance, the policy is designed to correct – not punish – unacceptable actions and behaviours because of the safety risks associated with alcohol and drug use. Employee assistance programs (EAPs) will help assess and facilitate any corrections that are necessary to ensure ongoing compliance with the Canadian Model.

This supervisors' guide has been designed to provide supervisors with the skills and knowledge required to facilitate education within their work crews about alcohol and drug issues, as well as to effectively manage alcohol and drug related performance issues. To this end, the guide addresses matters beyond the alcohol and drug guidelines such as:

- Understanding terminology associated with alcohol and drug use
- Providing awareness of the needs of workers who are returning to work from counselling or a rehabilitation program
- Recognizing that support systems are available that are designed to assist supervisors, leaders and other workers in addressing alcohol or drug related issues.

Desired outcomes

After reviewing this supervisors' guide, you should:

- Understand the fundamental purpose of the guidelines and know the standards and requirements established by those guidelines
- Know the meaning of some common alcohol and drug related terms
- Understand the concept of enabling and the importance of avoiding behaviours that allow problems related to alcohol or drug use to continue unaddressed
- Have information about alcohol and drug issues related to the Canadian Model to help you in communicating policy issues to your work crews
- Know your role and responsibilities in addressing performance problems related to alcohol and drug use
- Have a greater ability to recognize the behaviours or conduct that may indicate performance problems related to alcohol and drug use
- Know and clearly understand the process and steps to manage and address performance issues in general, as well as performance problems related to alcohol or drugs specifically
- Know the support systems designed to assist supervisors and team members in addressing performance issues.

Alcohol and drug guidelines

Guiding principles

The alcohol and drug guidelines are based on a number of key fundamental principles.

- **Shared responsibility for safety**

As a matter of law and as a practical fact, both individuals and companies in the Canadian construction, maintenance, and oil and gas industries have a shared responsibility for safety in the workplace. The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* of Alberta imposes a legal obligation on all workers to protect the health and safety of themselves and other workers.

- **Behaviour on and off the job**

The commitment of workers to safety cannot be measured only by their conduct and performance on the job. By necessity, given the nature of operations in the construction, maintenance, and oil and gas industries, workers must have regard to conduct or behaviour on and off the job that may adversely affect their ability to safely perform their duties at work. This specifically extends to the consumption or use of alcohol and drugs as addressed by the Canadian Model.

- **Balancing safety and privacy interests**

Society's view with respect to alcohol and drug use in Canada has been rapidly evolving in recent years, especially regarding how this use potentially affects the safety and well-being of others. Well-recognized examples, such as those relating to the dangers of drinking and driving or the promotion of the use of seat belts, are becoming more prominent and common.

Initiatives to manage and eliminate safety risks in the workplace benefit all stakeholders, including workers (and their families) and business organizations. At the same time, it is also important that the rights of workers be respected, particularly regarding protection against unnecessary intrusion into their personal privacy, as we work towards achieving zero workplace incidents. When the Canadian Model's work rule, guidelines and procedures are followed, a balance can be attained between ensuring safety in the workplace and respecting the privacy of all workers.

- **Privacy of information**

In 2004, privacy legislation was enacted that provides for protection surrounding the collection, use and disclosure of personal information about individuals. The Canadian Model also stresses the importance of ensuring confidentiality of information and that in all circumstances workers be treated with dignity and respect in the application of the policy. Efforts have been taken to ensure that the Canadian Model complies with Alberta privacy legislation (*Personal Information Protection Act*), as well as federal privacy legislation PIPEDA (*Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documentation Act*).

- **Encourage worker self-referral**

Workers who feel they may be experiencing problems associated with alcohol or drug use should voluntarily seek help under an EAP that has been identified by the company, labour provider, employer organization or worker association.

A closer look at the alcohol and drug guidelines

- **Work standards**

The guidelines set out, very definitively, the standards that must be met by all workers to ensure their safety and the safety of others.

- No worker shall distribute, possess, consume or use alcohol or illegal drugs on any company workplace
- No worker shall report to work or be at work under the influence of alcohol or drugs that may or will affect their ability to work safely
- No worker shall test positive for any alcohol or drugs at concentrations as specified in section 3.1 of the alcohol and drug work rule
- No worker shall misuse prescription or non-prescription drugs while at work. If a worker is taking a prescription or non-prescription drug for which there is a potential unsafe side effect, he or she has an obligation to report it to the supervisor.

- **Alcohol and drug testing circumstances**

Alcohol and drug testing may be conducted in the following circumstances:

- Prior to accessing the owner's property
- Where the employer has reasonable grounds to believe an employee may be unable to work in a safe manner because of the use of alcohol or drugs
- As part of an investigation into an incident or near miss to determine if alcohol or drugs could have played a role
- Where employees are covered by EAPs, the employer may conduct lawful computer-generated random alcohol and drug testing of the workforce.

- **Consequences for non-negative test results**

- The employer may discipline or terminate for cause an employee who fails to comply with the alcohol and drug work rule
- Prior to the employer making a decision with regard to discipline or termination, the employee shall meet with a substance abuse expert who shall make an assessment of the employee and make appropriate recommendations
- The employee must demonstrate compliance with the recommendations of the substance abuse expert or licensed physician with knowledge of substance abuse disorders, as well as sign an agreement specifying return-to-work conditions imposed as part of a rehabilitation program and other reasonable conditions set by the employer.

- **Education**

The industry recognizes the importance of making workers aware through education of the actual and potential risks, both on and off the job, related to the consumption or use of alcohol or drugs. As with other safety programs, the industry will use worker education and awareness as the principal method of ensuring compliance with the guidelines and reducing workplace health and safety concerns associated with non-compliance.

- **Self-referral to employee assistance services**

The industry encourages workers to seek professional assistance if they know or suspect they have a problem with drugs or alcohol, and supports self-referral to existing employee assistance services programs for that purpose.

Any worker who is receiving assistance from an employee assistance services program for an alcohol or drug problem must comply with the terms and conditions of the program and must comply with the standards set by the guidelines.

Common definitions

Following are definitions of some terms commonly used in the context of alcohol and drug use.

Addiction

Traditionally, this term has been synonymous with physical dependence and full-fledged withdrawal symptoms. Addiction is characterized by:

- **Change in tolerance** – Initial increases in tolerance (more of the drug is needed to produce the desired effect) is a key characteristic of the early stages of addiction; in the later stages of addiction to alcohol and some drugs, sensitization may occur (less is needed to produce the same effect)
- **Loss of control** – The amount of substance consumed, and the timing or place of consumption
- **Blackouts** (if the drug of choice is alcohol) – No recall of events (alcohol-induced amnesia)
- **Physical complications** – Examples include malnutrition, hypertension, liver damage
- **Psychological symptoms** – Defense mechanisms designed to minimize feelings of anxiety and despair. These defense mechanisms are a coping strategy as the person's self-esteem is diminished and his or her sense of powerlessness is increased. Examples include:
 - Denial (the most common defense mechanism) – Denying that the person is experiencing negative consequences and insisting that he or she has control over the use and amount of drug of choice
 - Projection – Blaming others and events that cause the person to use the drug of choice
 - Rationalization – Using excuses to support the use of the drug of choice
- **Social or family complications** – The drug of choice may replace people (family, friends, work) as the chief source of comfort and nurture and the object of loyalty, leading to social isolation, increased secrecy, inconsistent moods and loss of people who were important in the person's life.

Dependency

- **Physical** – The user's body has become so accustomed to the presence of the drug that when it is no longer used, withdrawal symptoms occur. These may be mild, such as sneezing and a runny nose, to very severe, such as potentially fatal convulsions. The severity of withdrawal increases with the level of the drug taken and the duration of its use
- **Psychological** – Users believe that they cannot function without the drug and persistently crave it to maintain their reduced anxiety (for instance), as well as to avoid physical withdrawal symptoms.

Drugs

Any substance, chemical or agent the use or possession of which is unlawful in Canada or requires a personal prescription or authorization from a licensed treating physician, or the use of which is regulated by legislation such as marijuana/cannabis, or any other psychoactive substance, and any non-prescription medication lawfully sold in Canada, and drug paraphernalia.

Employee assistance services

Services that are designed to help employees and their families who are experiencing personal problems such as alcohol and drug abuse. These are also organizations that have the ability to put a rehabilitation program in place. Examples include employee assistance programs (EAP) and employee and family assistance programs (EFAP).

Rehabilitation program

A program tailored to the needs of an individual that may include education, counselling and residential care offered to assist a person to comply with the alcohol and drug work rule.

Tolerance

An adaptation of the body to the presence of a drug. When tolerance occurs, the body requires greater amounts of the drug to produce the desired effect.

What is enabling?

While we may genuinely want to help a worker with a performance problem that is related to alcohol or drug use, often by our actions or inaction we allow the problem to continue unaddressed.

There are many reasons that may prevent or deter us from addressing alcohol or drug related performance problems. One of the most common reasons is that we want to protect the worker from the potential consequences of his or her actions, such as loss of employment or damage to the worker's reputation and self-esteem. This is called enabling and it is a natural reaction that many of us experience when we see someone who is in trouble or pain.

Ironically, by failing to deal directly with the issue, we may be exposing the worker, other team members and ourselves to even greater consequences (namely injury or death) when the performance issue becomes or may become a safety issue.

Enabling is an easy trap to fall into, particularly when it involves performance issues in a team. First, there is comfort in numbers, which causes us to wait for someone else in the team to raise or address the issue. Second, as social beings we naturally avoid conflict. Ignoring the situation is a common avoidance method. Another is to defer dealing with it by making adjustments and compromises, hoping that it will somehow resolve itself without conflict or our involvement.

In either case, we end up protecting the worker who has the performance problem and exposing ourselves and the team to unnecessary anxiety and risk. Furthermore, we prevent the worker from taking the steps necessary to resolve the problem and from experiencing the associated learning and development to help reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

Breaking the cycle of enabling

When performance issues arise in a team, and in particular the issues relate to a team member's use of alcohol or drugs, it is important for the employer, team supervisor and other team members to avoid enabling behaviours by:

- Recognizing that enabling behaviours do not solve performance issues, they allow them to continue and often result in them worsening
- Realizing that the sooner performance issues are addressed (particularly sensitive ones) the easier they are to resolve
- Remembering that everyone on the team, including the worker with the performance problem, shares a common objective – to create a healthy and safe team environment
- Implementing a policy that leads by example and is consistent for all workers regardless of what title they may have
- Ensuring that the company also leads by example
- Making sure that all instances requiring an alcohol and drug test are assessed based on their individual circumstances.

Addressing performance issues

Supervisors' roles and responsibilities

Every supervisor's prime responsibility on a team is to help manage the performance of the other team members by ensuring that the following are in place:

- **Job understanding** – Each team member has a clear understanding of the expected level of performance required for his or her job
- **Job skills** – Each team member has the base competencies and skills required to achieve the expected level of performance
- **Job performance** – Performance that consistently exceeds the expected level of performance is promptly recognized and rewarded, and performance that consistently or sporadically falls below the expected level is promptly addressed and resolved.

In their leadership role, supervisors need to be sensitive to changes in behaviour or performance of a fellow team member that may be related to alcohol or drug use off the workplace, and to be familiar with the support systems within the company designed to assist both the supervisor and that team member in dealing with the issue in a constructive and effective manner. The process to be followed in addressing and resolving alcohol and drug related performance issues is discussed in the next section.

Where a supervisor believes that a worker's performance or behaviour problem is related to alcohol or drug use off the workplace, it is not the supervisor's role or responsibility to make any further assessment or diagnosis or to provide counselling to the worker. In such cases, the supervisor should seek the assistance of his or her human resources representative, manager or both.

It is also inappropriate and counterproductive for a supervisor to judge or evaluate whether a worker's behaviour is morally or socially acceptable. Supervisors must remain objective by focusing on the facts of each case and not let their personal views on alcohol and drugs affect their judgment and actions.

Whenever a supervisor believes that alcohol or drug use by a worker may be impacting work performance, then the basis or focus for the intervention or discussion with the employee should be specific work performance indicators. The following sections look at basic fundamentals regarding how to manage work performance issues.

Managing performance issues

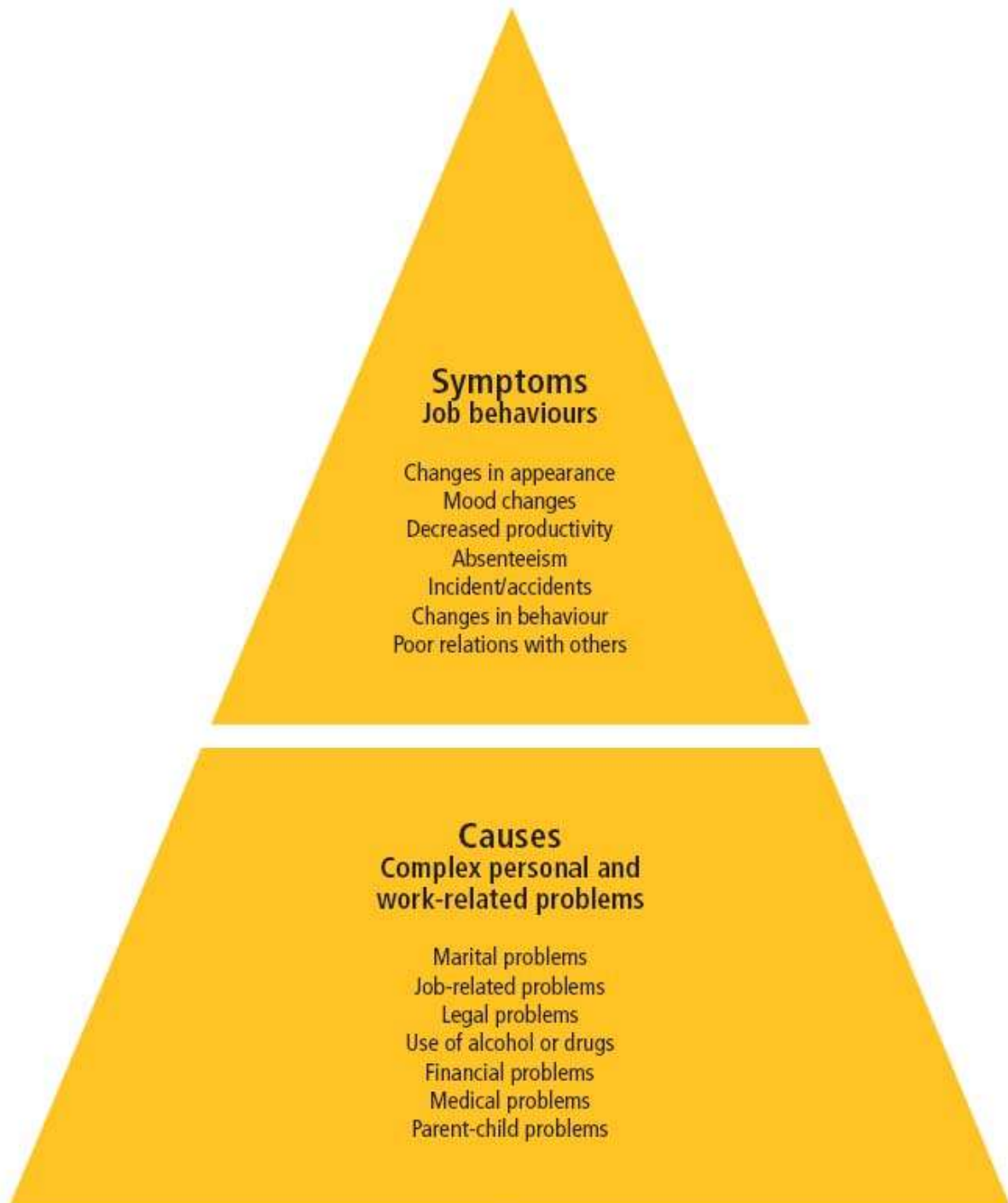
Addressing alcohol or drug related performance issues is simply another component of performance management. It does not require any new skills other than an understanding of the application of the alcohol and drug guidelines and policy. The following discussion is a good opportunity for supervisors to refresh their memories and skills in the area of performance management. This discussion will also explain how addressing such issues falls within the usual performance management process.

Performance and behaviour issues that are or may be related to alcohol or drug use off the workplace should be identified, documented, addressed and resolved using essentially the same process as any other performance concern.

- **Step one – Identify substandard performance**
Supervisors are responsible for monitoring worker performance and addressing situations where performance consistently or sporadically falls below the expected level of performance.

Performance issues can arise in a worker's career for a variety of reasons. Deteriorating work performance can be caused by a work-related problem (such as a conflict with a team member or uncertainty about job responsibilities or employment security) or by personal problems (such as marital or financial stress or the use of alcohol or drugs). Figure 1 provides information relating to the symptoms and causes of employee performance problems.

Figure 1 Iceberg concept of employee performance problems



Noticeable and prolonged deviation in a worker's standard of performance or usual behaviour can sometimes be the result of use of alcohol or drugs. Behaviours that may be symptomatic of alcohol or drug use can appear singularly or in combination, as shown in Figure 2.

However, it is important for supervisors to understand that a decline in work performance does not necessarily mean a worker has a problem associated with the use of alcohol or drugs. For example, some of the behaviours identified in this supervisors' guide may indicate problems not related to alcohol or drug use, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.

As mentioned previously, it is not the responsibility of the supervisor to determine whether or not a worker's performance problem is a consequence of the use of alcohol or drugs off the workplace. The supervisor's responsibility is limited to monitoring work performance and identifying, documenting and addressing performance problems in accordance with the company's existing discipline policy.

Instead of looking for behaviours that may indicate a problem related to alcohol and drug use, supervisors should concentrate on identifying and documenting changes in a worker's job performance without making moral judgments or assuming the role of counsellor.

Figure 2 Signs of deteriorating job performance



- **Step two – Document performance and behaviour concerns**

Once a potential performance problem has been identified, the supervisor must continue to monitor the worker's behaviour and document what is observed.

All workers experience bad days or temporary periods where their performance may slip for a variety of reasons associated with the normal challenges of life. What distinguishes performance problems, which may be related to alcohol or drug use or to some other serious cause, from these normal and regular occurrences is the formation of a pattern, either continuous or repeating. Documentation allows a supervisor to properly record and identify trends that may indicate a performance problem requiring special attention. This documentation is critical because a supervisor cannot request an alcohol and drug test for a worker without showing to the manager the proper support for that request.

When documenting performance, supervisors should:

1. **Keep a daily journal of the worker's behaviour.** Record not only negative behaviours or substandard job performance but also cases where the worker has met or exceeded expectations. By keeping a daily log, a supervisor can more easily see changes or patterns in a worker's behaviour over an extended period of time.
2. **Keep all information strictly confidential.** Records of performance should be kept out of sight of other workers and should be safely stored and locked when not in use.
3. **Follow the five w's (who, what, where, when and why).** Record specific details of observed behaviour and ensure that such observations are objective and free of personal bias or judgment. Think of yourself as a newspaper reporter and document only what you see.
4. **Relate all observations to job performance.** Explain in measurable terms how a worker is performing in relation to agreed-upon expectations such as job descriptions, goals or objectives.
5. **Keep track of issues and communication.** Maintain a chronological account of performance issues and problems as well as meetings and coaching sessions with the worker and related interactions and improvements.

It is important that the supervisor keep in mind that his or her job is to monitor job performance and record relevant facts. By identifying and addressing substandard performance, the supervisor is taking the first steps in assisting the worker to improve his or her performance.

- **Step three – Meet with the worker to discuss observations and concerns**

Discussing a performance problem with a worker is often the most difficult and uncomfortable step in the performance management process. A supervisor must overcome that discomfort and meet with the worker once sufficient information has been gathered to adequately discuss the performance issue. This means establishing clear goals and expectations for the interview.

It should be noted that, in keeping with the alcohol and drug policy, a representative of a union or employee organization of which a worker is a member and with whom the employer has a bargaining relationship, may attend any meeting or discussion if the worker wishes the representative to attend.

Supervisors must also be prepared for a worker's anger and denial. It is common for a person who is confronted with a problem to deny it either because they do not recognize that their behaviour is inappropriate or because they fear reprisal or disciplinary action. At that point, the supervisor must be very careful not to enter into a debate or argument with the worker.

It is usually helpful to review the goals of the interview with the worker at the start of the meeting to ensure the worker understands that the purpose of the interview is to discuss a deterioration in job performance that the supervisor has observed and documented. By focusing on the facts in an objective, professional and concerned manner, the supervisor should be able to diffuse any anger so that the problem can be discussed in a calm and constructive manner.

Following are some tips for effective interviews:

- Have clear goals for the interview
- Review documentation and information prior to the interview
- Conduct the interview in private and without interruption
- Direct the course of the interview. Do not allow the worker to direct the discussion away from his or her performance
- Discuss positive aspects of the worker's performance, as well as reviewing documented concerns
- Explain the consequences of not addressing and resolving substandard performance
- Conclude the interview with a positive outlook. Communicate your confidence that the worker can improve his or her performance.

- **Step four – Develop an action plan**

Developing an action plan to correct a performance problem is an essential step in managing serious or potentially serious issues, particularly those that may be related to alcohol and drug use off the workplace. However, simple action plans can also be used in addressing relatively minor performance issues.

Ideally, the action plan should be developed and signed jointly by the supervisor and the worker. It should also be identified as one of the goals of the interview and completed at the end of the initial meeting whenever possible. Alternatively, it should be done as soon after the initial meeting as is reasonably practicable.

The action plan should address very clearly the following matters:

1. A description of the performance problem to be addressed by the action plan
2. A description of the level of performance expected of the worker having regard to the worker's training and experience, years of service, level and past performance
3. The course of action and schedule to bring the worker's performance to the expected level including, where applicable, targets and associated dates
4. Special requirements or support, such as internal or external training courses or the involvement of an employee assistance services provider
5. The role of the supervisor and of the worker in the successful completion of the action plan.

- **Step five – Continue to document performance and conduct followup interviews**

Once the action plan has been completed, the supervisor must continue to monitor the worker's performance to ensure that the goals and schedule of the action plan are being met. Using the techniques described earlier in this section, the supervisor needs to objectively and thoroughly document relevant behaviour and monitor the progress or status of the worker's performance against the agreed-upon expectations.

The supervisor should conduct regular followup meetings to review the worker's performance and to discuss progress. It is important that the worker be supported and encouraged during this time. Followup meetings provide an opportunity to reinforce positive behaviours as well as offering assistance in areas where progress is lacking.

The frequency of followup meetings can be expressly addressed in the action plan.

- **Step six – Assessing the outcome and need for further action**

- **When the plan objectives are met**

If the worker's performance improves to the expected level in accordance with the action plan, then the supervisor's responsibilities revert to normal monitoring and coaching with performance feedback occurring during regular performance review sessions.

- **When the plan objectives are not met**

If the worker fails or later refuses to meet the requirements of the action plan and bring his or her performance to the expected level, or if the worker meets the requirements of the action plan but is unable to sustain the expected level of performance, then the supervisor should proceed with a formal corrective action process if the supervisor has not already adopted that process.

- **When the failure may be related to alcohol or drug use**

If the supervisor suspects that the worker's failure, refusal or inability to achieve or maintain the expected level of performance may be related to alcohol or drug use off the workplace, then the supervisor should meet with the worker to discuss that concern. At that meeting, the supervisor should refer to the documented behaviours that he or she feels may be symptomatic of alcohol or drug use. The supervisor should then suggest that the worker seek help from an employee assistance services program by self-referral and allow the worker reasonable time to do so. Self-referral to an employee assistance services program usually involves a worker or family member attending the program without the knowledge or assistance of anyone else. Depending on the circumstances, the supervisor may also offer to help the worker in seeking that assistance.

Alternatively, if the supervisor would prefer to have confirmation that the worker is under the care of an employee assistance services program, then the supervisor can initiate an informal referral to the program. An informal referral means a referral of a worker to the program by another person such as the worker's leader, health and wellness advisor or human resources representative. An informal referral is made on the express understanding that the program's personnel will only confirm to the leader or other person requesting the referral whether or not the worker has attended the program as requested.

If the worker's performance does not improve, the supervisor can also initiate a formal referral to an employee assistance services program where the program's counsellor provides the supervisor with reports on the progress of the worker.

As noted in this supervisors' guide, if a supervisor has a reasonable suspicion at any time that a worker's failure to correct a chronic performance problem is due to the worker using alcohol or drugs at work or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs at work, then the supervisor should so advise the worker and allow the worker an opportunity to provide an explanation. However, if the worker's explanation does not dispel or contradict the supervisor's suspicion, then the worker should be required to submit to an alcohol and drug test.

Questions and answers (to be completed by supervisors)

- What communications do you undertake to inform your team about the alcohol and drug guidelines?
- What do you currently do to monitor behaviour and performance within your team?
- What signs or indications in a worker's performance or behaviour would alert you to the possibility that such performance or behaviour may be related to alcohol or drug use?

Supervisor and team support

Returning to work – What can you do to help?

In the cases where a worker has admitted to being under the care of an employee assistance services program or where a worker was in a rehabilitation program as part of an offer of conditional rehire, there are things supervisors can do to make the return-to-work process successful in the long term.

The manner in which a supervisor manages a worker who has returned to work should not be different than management of other staff.

Good leadership involves establishing clear job performance expectations, open communication and mutual respect. Supervisors must be aware of the confidential nature of the situation and should not disclose or discuss the nature of the worker's problem or the details of his or her absence with other staff members. The returning worker needs to make his or her own decisions about sharing this personal information with other members of the team.

The return-to-work interview

When a worker returns to work following rehabilitation for an alcohol or drug problem, an interview between the supervisor or designated team members and the returning worker should take place immediately. This interview should include:

- A discussion of the worker's job description noting any changes stemming from the personal action plan (i.e. limited duties, arrangements for continued counselling)
- A clear description of expectations and specific areas that require improvement
- Development of a followup process, so that both the supervisor and worker know when regular followup sessions are to occur and what will be discussed
- A provision of time if the worker wishes to comment on his or her experience in counselling or the rehabilitation program. This discussion time may involve the worker proposing changes in how he or she intends to handle work-related stress
- An offer of support. This interview provides an opportunity to establish a new, positive working relationship based on a solid understanding of realistic and clear job performance expectations.

It is important to remember that the first several weeks of a worker's return to work are crucial in setting a tone and atmosphere of cooperation and support.

Understanding what has changed

People who have experienced negative effects from their use of alcohol or drugs may develop problems in many areas. For some, social and family relationships have suffered, while others have experienced financial, legal or physical health problems. Such an individual may be in the process of making a number of major lifestyle changes.

These changes will not occur overnight – new health-related skills must be learned. Family, social and work expectations and relationships need to be re-negotiated and re-defined.

What is a relapse?

Seventy-six per cent of relapses occur when individuals are trying to cope with negative emotional states such as loneliness, anger and boredom (many of these problems may have been contributing factors in the individual's initial use). Most people who have experienced problems from their alcohol or drug use may return to drinking or drug use, not because they want to but because they perceive themselves as having no other acceptable choices. Relapse indicates that the individual has not yet developed alternatives for dealing with day-to-day stresses.

Signs of a potential relapse may include:

- Emotional outbursts – The person over-reacts to common situations and appears to be stressed
- Physical and social isolation
- Irritation with friends and co-workers, relationships with other workers become strained
- Interruption of daily routines – The individual may change their normal eating and sleeping patterns leading to listlessness and fatigue
- Development of an “I don’t care” attitude
- Open rejection of help
- Premature cessation of counselling and/or attendance of self-help groups.

Access to help or support

It is important to recognize that supervisors do not have all the answers and may require help or support from other resources within the company. There are a number of resources and/or support systems that can assist in addressing alcohol or drug related concerns.

- **Employee assistance services programs**

The aim of employee assistance services is to assist the worker and family members to obtain diagnosis, counsel and treatment for problems that can affect a worker’s or family member’s ability to cope. The program places emphasis on prevention and early detection of potential problems before they become a threat to the worker and the job.

Workers are encouraged to seek help under the designated employee assistance services program for any alcohol or drug related problem. Workers can contact employee assistance services on their own, or with the assistance of their manager, supervisor or human resources representative.

In addition to providing counselling and referral services to workers and family members who are experiencing problems, employee assistance services can also provide assistance to co-workers and/or supervisors who may be concerned about an individual’s behaviour and/or actions but are unsure as to what to do.

Helpful literature on a wide variety of health, behavioural and lifestyle concerns is available through the employee assistance services program. Information will be mailed on a personal and private basis as requested by workers or family members.