



Introduction to

Guidelines for Substance Abuse Prevention in the Workplace

Context

Publication of this guide is part of a process initiated with the release of the 2007 joint report by the Interdepartmental Mission for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction and the Directorate General for Labour (MILDT-DGT) for the attention of the Prime Minister, who has recommended an integrated approach to preventing addictive behaviour in the workplace that covers health, safety and regulatory aspects. It is based on the conclusions of two regional forums and the national forum of 25 June 2010 which were held as part of the government's 2008-2011 plan to fight drugs and drug addiction.

The opinion of the National Ethics Advisory Committee for Life Sciences and Health on 19 May 2011 led the way for negotiations by companies and business sectors on the need for prevention and careful supervision of testing methods, and the law of 20 July 2011 on the organisation of workplace health services has made the role of occupational health physicians and their staffs clear and key in preventing substance abuse in the workplace.

The issue, along with other workplace risks, is raising increasing concern for day-to-day business, where, due to a lack of consistent policy, prevention and disciplinary action alternate and there is increasing need for guidelines.

Current events are paying increasing attention to the issue both in the media and meetings organised by businesses, professionals and regional government.

Publication of the guide also derives from a supportive European context. In June 2012, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Dublin) will present an analytical and comparative report on the situation in the 27 EU member countries, and in May 2012 the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe, under the French Presidency, will offer a framework for intervention in the workplace with actions based on the principles of responsibility, transparency and respect for individual and collective freedoms.

Lastly, it should be noted that this guide is being made available at the same time that INPES has published an issue of the *Baromètre Santé* on the use of psychotropic substances by the working population and Université Victor Ségalen (Bordeaux) has released its survey results.

To respond to the needs of all parties concerned, *Guidelines for Substance Abuse Prevention in the Workplace* was prepared by an editorial committee composed of government authorities (DGT/MILDT); INRS, the French national institute for occupational and safety research jointly run by employer and employee representatives; and two private consultancies, Hassé-Consultants and Wallco, who provided support to the national forum in June 2010.

Why a guide?

The business environment is directly impacted by addictive behaviour since substance abuse is increasing there as in the larger society. Managing the issues involved in the workplace is more complex since it involves both individuals and groups as well as management choices, including decisions on employee retention and re-integration. This relationship requires anticipating conditions for employee care but also concerns the quality of work relationships while highlighting certain sociability codes.

The risks are many-sided: they involve not only the worker's health but also the worker's safety and that of others (co-workers and customers). Workers who abuse psychotropic drugs endanger their jobs as well as the productivity of the company with the additional risk in a globalised market of distorting competition between countries, depending on legislation and manufacturing requirements.

This tension between health, work safety and work tool safety opens the way to testing practices that can undermine personal freedom if they are not carefully supervised so that measures to protect the value of the individual and work can be implemented.

Three major issues serve as the basis for this guide

The first concerns the cause of substance abuse: while abuse may result only from personal life and intrude upon the employee's professional career, it can also be caused by a demanding professional career that brings stress to the individual's personal life.

From a legal standpoint, it is necessary to find a balance among these concerns.

From an ethical standpoint, it is necessary to determine what boundary should be maintained between personal and professional life and how to protect it.

The second concerns employer responsibility for employee health and how to prevent abuse and accompanying risks.

Their legal situation is considered in addition to resources available to them to meet their obligation to achieve results.

Examination also concerns the role and justification of screening tests.

Should tests only be performed under the exclusive supervision of occupational health physicians?

By other health professionals with sufficient authority? By those with special skills in providing tests? Or by those qualified to interpret the results?

The third concerns the responsibility of others involved and the role of the workplace health service.

The guide was thus designed to remedy inadequacies observed in prevention practices and legal reassurance for those involved and provide reliable guidelines to prevent risks related to substance abuse in the workplace.

What does the guide offer?

Intended for all professionals, the goal of the guide is to initiate or further a firm's discussion of a complex topic. Its objective is to facilitate implementation of effective prevention policies that can anticipate future problems and avoid responses that rely exclusively on discipline. In providing collective and non-stigmatising responses, it helps reduce the number of work accidents and conflicts as well as the number of dismissals resulting from a medical opinion that a person is unfit for a job on this basis.

The guide offers information from proven practices

that include methodological guidelines, with progressive steps enabling all involved to reach a shared diagnosis and a protocol accepted by everyone in the company: intervention methods, resources to be used, keys for success to reassure, convince, build consensus, accompany, communicate; pitfalls to avoid; and each person's role

and responsibilities.

The guide proves concrete responses regarding

saliva tests, by stressing that a prevention policy cannot be limited to such testing and giving conditions in which they can be performed and by whom;
safety- and security-related jobs, with the knowledge that the list is determined by the company and depends on the type of business and its organisation, after taking into consideration opinions of works and health and safety committees;
the case of firms with less than twenty employees that lack work rules; and the employer's sanctioning powers.

By providing responses to these and many other questions, this guide will help each person in the company, with the assistance of the workplace health service, to resolve problems related to substance abuse.

It offers practical tools in the form of technical files (prevention and action coordinators, screening tests, work rules, single risk assessment document) as well as summary procedures that give a succinct overview of what needs to be taken into account when screening. It goes beyond the issue of illegal drugs to provide regulations and good practices for detention, drug abuse and screening.

This 70-page guide offers comprehensive coverage of all issues involved at the time of publication. It is available online at MILDT's site (www.droques.gouv.fr) as well as that of the DGT (www.travailler-mieux.gouv.fr) and will be updated regularly.