

Drug and Alcohol Policy Development

The first step in dealing with drug and alcohol problems in the workplace is to develop a drug and alcohol policy. The [ILO Code of Practice](#) on the management of alcohol and drug-related issues in the workplace emphasises a preventive approach. They recommend a joint assessment by employers and workers of the effects of alcohol and drug use and workers co-operation in developing a written policy.

The aim of the policy should be prevention, education, training and rehabilitation. It is important to involve employees from all levels and/or their representatives. Consultation is fundamental to the resolution of the issue, and there can't be one rule for employees and another for contractors, or employers. The policy must be consistent and fair to all.

The "Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Workplace" (4 MB) guide is the result of a collaboration between ACC, the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand (ALAC), and the New Zealand Drug Foundation. The booklet uses information from the latest national and international research and statistics to illustrate the issue and offer solutions.

The booklet is a comprehensive approach to dealing with the issue, which an employer has a legal obligation to address as a workplace hazard. The publication suggests ways to develop robust workplace alcohol and drug programmes in consultation with employees and their representatives, with a focus on prevention, education, counselling and rehabilitation.

Drug and alcohol use is also a very personal matter, and policies that attempt to influence employees' lives outside of work need to be well considered and consulted on before being applied in the workplace.

Employees don't like the idea that something is being imposed on them without an opportunity to discuss it first. A policy will work best if it has been developed in full co-operation with staff and is the result of a joint assessment of the problem. You need 'buy in' for the policy to work. The policy should be written clearly and made available to everyone.

An effective policy will address the needs of the workplace. It will aim at avoiding worker impairment, and not discriminating against or punishing employees. This means it should contain processes for addressing problems constructively, not simply removing or penalising workers who fail to operate within the policy.

The policy should cover:

- Drinking and drug use at work
- Workplace discipline
- Recognition and help for those with alcohol and drug-related problems
- Alcohol and drug education
- Training with supporting resources.

A successful policy will therefore describe the desired outcome for the workplace and then the steps that will be taken to achieve it.

Once you've got a written policy, you'll need to make it known and integrate it into HR and Health and Safety management practices, such as recruitment and induction training, and generally making it available.

The information presented in this document is intended for general use only. It should not be viewed as a definitive guide to the law, and should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and associated regulations (where relevant).