



# ORCA TALES



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Tenant Background Investigations

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managers greatly appreciate this formal training. Most admit having had concerns about an employee's behavior, but weren't sure how to proceed. Training builds confidence and, back by a written drug policy, allows management to act.

### Raise Awareness Among Employees

Take it a step further – teach your employees the signs and dangers of drug abuse, too. Encourage them to report potential problems, and give them procedures for doing so. Post signs declaring your company's anti-drug policy.

Chances are, the only employees who object to drug screening are those with a reason. According to a recent Gallup poll, 96% of employees favor drug screening in at least some circumstances.

### Drug Testing 101: Pass or Fail?

Having a drug free workplace policy doesn't mean employees will not be drug users. The policy works similarly to not being able to use cell phones on airplanes. Everyone knows the rule, but there will still be one passenger who has to make a last hushed call or send a quick text. The same applies to having a drug free workplace policy. Employees may know the policy, but how does an organization ensure their employees stay drug free? Implementing a drug testing program in the workplace is one way to ensure this. Here are some basics you should know when considering a pre-employment or random drug testing program.

### Drug Testing Procedures

Drug testing procedures vary with each organization depending on the hiring cycle, clinics, and many other factors of a drug testing program. The most common procedure for conducting a drug test consists of having an applicant or employee submit his or her specimen at a collection site. Collection sites are certified medical facilities authorized to collect a specimen, whether it be urine, saliva or hair, to test for traces of drugs of abuse in the body. The specimen is sent to a lab for processing and confirmation of any drug usage. If the result is negative, the applicant or employee has passed the drug test. If the result is positive, or non-negative in industry terms, the specimen is sent to a Medical Review Officer (MRO) to verify the results of the drug test. When the MRO completes the review, he or she will re-confirm or overturn the results. If the MRO overturns the results, the applicant or employee has passed the drug test due to having a valid prescription for the substance. If the MRO re-confirms the results, the applicant or employee has failed the drug test.

### Drug Testing Panels

The term "panels" is synonymous to "types" of drugs being tested. When employment drug testing was first used, the common practice was to run a 10 panel test. This 10 panel test included the following drugs: Marijuana, Cocaine, Phencyclidine (PCP), Opiates, Amphetamines, Barbiturates, Benzodiazepines, Methadone, Methaqualone and Propoxyphene. Since that time, many changes have shaped the way drug testing is conducted in the workplace including involvement with the Federal Government requiring federal employees and contractors to undergo a 5 panel drug test. The 5 panel drug testing includes Marijuana, Cocaine, Phencyclidine (PCP), Opiates and Amphetamines. This drug testing program has been expanded to include all employees of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). All persons designated in safety sensitive jobs that involve transportation or hazardous materials must be included in this program. Also in recent years, the manufacture of Methaqualone has stopped and Propoxyphene has been restricted to a small European market. Therefore, it is common to hear the 9 panel drug test mentioned when setting up a drug testing remaining beyond the 5 panel test, Barbiturates, Benzodiazepines and Methadone, are for the most part found in prescription drugs. Positive results for any of these drugs are often overturned by the MRO.

### 5 vs. 7 Panel Drug Test

Recently, the DOT has added two drugs to their required 5 panel drug test. This has created some confusion in the industry as to what this new test should be called. The DOT had previously required a 5 panel drug test that includes the following panels or classes of drugs: Opiates, Amphetamines, Cocaine, Marijuana and Phencyclidine (PCP). The revised testing requires added a mandatory test for Heroin (6-MAM) to the Opiate Panel. In the past, Heroin was only tested for if the Opiate levels were very high. The other mandatory test added was Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), also known as Ecstasy. As the ending to the name of the drug implies, this is an amphetamine and was added to the Amphetamine Panel. This is where the confusion arose. Although the test still encompasses 5 classes of drugs, the addition of the two extra drugs has some people calling this a 7 panel test. A true 7 panel includes testing for Barbiturates and Benzodiazepines.

### Urine Testing

When pre-employment drug testing began, urine testing was the only type available. It is capable of detecting drug use within the last 48-72 hours. Marijuana has a longer window of detection since THC collects in the fat cells as a fat soluble chemical, while most other drugs are water soluble. Urine is currently the only approved testing method for any government programs. The typical drug test checks for the presence of the drug metabolite and/or the parent drug itself. Metabolites are specific substances the body produces to make ingested items useable to the body. Urine can be processed either as a lab based test or a Point of Collection Test known as an Instant Test.

### Saliva Testing

Saliva testing is becoming more popular in employment testing as it is designed to be collected by the employer and sent to a laboratory. It tests for the same drugs as urine, but the employee or applicant does not have to be sent to a collection site to have the sample taken. This provides the employer with some control in making sure a sample is provided and cuts down on the time an employee is taken away from his or her work. The saliva will provide a slightly shorter drug use history than a urine test. The saliva test also detects the drug sooner than a urine or hair test. This makes a lab based saliva test the best practice in a post-accident or reasonable suspicion case. Saliva testing can be either instant or lab based, although lab based is the most recommended option.



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H. W. - Kent, WA

*"Thank you so much for your un-  
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K. D. - Yakima, WA

### ORCA \*WISDOM\*

*"There is no such hour on the  
timepiece of fate as "too late".*  
- S. G.

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### Drug Screening Programs

If your employer is like most employers, you're very interested in reducing expenses. One quick way to save thousands of dollars a year is to implement a drug screening program – or to maximize the one you already have.

Drug and alcohol abuse cost U.S. employers \$81 billion dollars each year, according to the Department of Labor. It is responsible for lost work time, poor productivity, accidents, and thefts... plus soaring health care and workers' compensation costs. It also creates a dangerous work environment.

The fact is, 77% of America's 12 million adult drug abusers are employed, or 8.2% of all full-time employees. You can bet they don't leave their problems at home. But the real question is: how many of them work for you? Don't wait to find out the hard way!

### Bad for Business: Drugs in the Workplace

In some industries, like manufacturing and transportation, the impaired judgment of drug users can cost lives. But dangers exist in white collar industries, too.

Drug users need to support their habits. 44% of users do so by selling drugs to coworkers, according to a National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. Some resort to theft, both against companies and other employees. For example, 18% of callers to the National Cocaine Helpline admit they've stolen from coworkers.

In addition, absenteeism skyrockets, productivity plummets, and team morale suffers when drugs enter the workplace. It's been estimated that drug abusers cost employers twice as much in medical and worker's compensation claims. In my experience, that's conservative. For example, one food company client implemented a drug screening program in 1998. That year, workers' comp claims totaling \$1.6 million. The following year, claims dropped to \$400,000. Today, worker's comp claims total \$2,500.

Implementing a drug prevention program is a shrewd investment. Now's the time to put one in place-or give your existing place a tune-up. Here's how:

### Five Steps to a Drug-Free Work Environment

#### 1. Define Your Drug Prevention Policy

You can't implement a policy until you define it. To get started, consult The Department of Labor's program, Working Partners for an Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace. Or, ask a reputable screening firm to help you craft a program.

The threat of a pre-employment drug test will immediately deter abusers from applying. Chances are, morale will rise – because workers don't want to be around drug users, either.

#### 2. Create Drug Screening Parameters

Some states have laws that regulate drug screening, so make sure your plan is in compliance. There are three testing scenarios to employ:

- Pre-Employment Testing – All prospective hires should be subject to drug testing.
- Random Testing – Randomly select a percentage of employees for screening at regular intervals. Make sure selection is truly random; it's discriminatory to do otherwise.
- Post-incident Test – Perform a drug test as quickly as possible following a work-related incident.

Don't underestimate the power of your screening program. When the Navy first implemented one in the 1980s, drug use quickly dropped from 28% to under 4%.

#### 3. Choose a Testing Method – Currently, there are three methods of testing:

- Urine Testing: The most commonly utilized test, it is cost-effective and widely accepted. But there are disadvantages. For one thing, employees must be sent to an offsite lab for testing. For another, hundreds of websites advise abstaining from drugs for three days before giving a sample – a fact drug users know and use to beat the test.
- Oral Fluid Testing: This form of testing is increasingly popular, because the oral swab can be given on site at the workplace and sent out for analysis. It costs about the same as urine testing (about \$35-\$40 per test), and is limited to the same 72-hour detection window.
- Hair Testing: The most effective method available, hair testing identifies drugs taken within a 90-day period. Few drug users can outsmart this one. At \$65-\$85 per test, it is admittedly more expensive. But what value – while the other tests end up costing about \$10 per testing day, hair testing amortizes to less than a dollar per covered day.

Whatever method you choose, use a government certified lab or agency to conduct the tests.

#### 4. Provide Drug Use Recognition Training

Train your managers and supervisors to recognize the signs and symptoms of drug use. It's not as obvious as you might think – did you know that crumpled soda cans are often castoff cocaine pipes?

A number of corporate security companies offer strong training programs. In my experience,

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