

APPENDIX 300-A
SIGNS, SYMPTOMS AND DANGERS
OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Substance abuse, the misuse of drugs and alcohol, is not a new issue, but it is one of growing concern to employers. Substance abuse is a problem in the workplace, costing businesses billions of dollars per year. Research has shown that substance abuse affects organizations, as evidenced by increased medical benefit claims, increased absenteeism, increased worker's compensation claims, and decreased productivity. Substance abuse poses serious safety and health risks not only to the user, but also to those who work with or come into contact with the abuser.

ALCOHOL FACTS

Alcohol, when consumed primarily for its physical and mood-altering effects, is a substance of abuse. As a depressant it slows down physical responses and progressively impairs mental functions. Signs and symptoms of use include dulled mental processes, lack of coordination, odor of alcohol on the breath, slowed reaction rate, and slurred speech. The chronic consumption of alcohol over time may result in dependency, fatal liver disease, kidney disease, and birth defects.

It takes one hour for the average person (150 pounds) to process one serving of an alcoholic beverage from the body. Impairment in coordination and judgment can be objectively measured with as little as two drinks in the body. A person who is legally intoxicated is six times more likely to have an accident than a sober person.

AMPHETAMINE FACTS

Amphetamines are central nervous system stimulants that speed up the mind and body. Signs and symptoms of use include hyper-excitability, restlessness, confusion, panic, talkativeness, inability to concentrate, and heightened aggressive behavior. Regular use produces strong psychological dependence and increasing tolerance to the drug.

Low-dose amphetamine use will cause short-term improvement in mental and physical functioning. With greater use, however, the effect reverses and has an impairing effect. Hangover effect is characterized by physical fatigue and depression, which may make operation of equipment or vehicles dangerous.

COCAINE FACTS

Cocaine is abused as a powerful physical and mental stimulant; the entire central nervous system is energized. Signs and symptoms of use include financial problems, increased physical activity and fatigue, isolation and withdrawal from friends and normal activities, unusual defensiveness, anxiety, agitation, and wide mood swings. Cocaine use causes the heart to beat faster and harder and rapidly increases blood pressure. Cocaine causes spasms of blood vessels in the brain and heart and can lead to ruptured vessels causing strokes or heart attacks. Extreme mood and energy swings create instability. Work

performance is characterized by forgetfulness, absenteeism, tardiness, and missed assignments.

MARIJUANA FACTS

People use marijuana for the mildly tranquilizing, mood altering and perception altering effects it produces. Signs and symptoms of use include reddened eyes, slowed speech, chronic fatigue, and lack of motivation. Chronic smoking of marijuana causes emphysema-like conditions. Regular use can cause diminished concentration, impaired short-term memory, impaired signal detection and impaired tracking (the ability to follow a moving object with the eye.)

Marijuana smoking has a long-term effect on performance. Combining alcohol and other depressant drugs and marijuana can produce a multiplied effect, increasing the impairing effect of both the depressant and marijuana.

OPIATES (NARCOTICS) FACTS

Opiates (also called narcotics) are drugs that alleviate pain, depress body functions, and when taken in large doses, cause a strong euphoric feeling. Signs and symptoms of use include mood changes, impaired mental functioning, depression and apathy, impaired coordination, and physical fatigue and drowsiness. IV needle users have a high risk for contracting hepatitis and AIDS due to sharing of needles.

Side effects of opiates such as nausea, vomiting, dizziness, mental clouding, and drowsiness place the legitimate user and abuser at higher risk for an accident. Workplace use may cause impairment of physical and mental functions.

PHENCYCLIDINE (PCP) FACTS

Phencyclidine acts as both a depressant and a hallucinogen, and sometimes a stimulant. Signs and symptoms of use include impaired coordination, severe confusion and agitation extreme mood shifts, rapid heartbeat, and dizziness. The potential for accidents and overdose is high due to the extreme mental effects combined with the anesthetic effect on the body. PCP use can cause irreversible memory loss, personality changes, and thought disorders.