

Requiring Drug Tests as a Condition of Employment:

Pros & Cons

Does your organization have a formal drug testing policy? Many employers do, primarily out of concern for safety of all workers. Many employers view such a program as mandatory because the employer has an obligation to provide a safe working environment.

That said, drug testing policies are not always simple or straightforward and it doesn't make the negatives of such a program simply disappear. There are many pros and cons to consider when implementing such a policy.

Pros

VS

Cons



With a reduction in the risk of accidents caused by drug-related incapacitation comes a reduction in the costs associated with such accidents

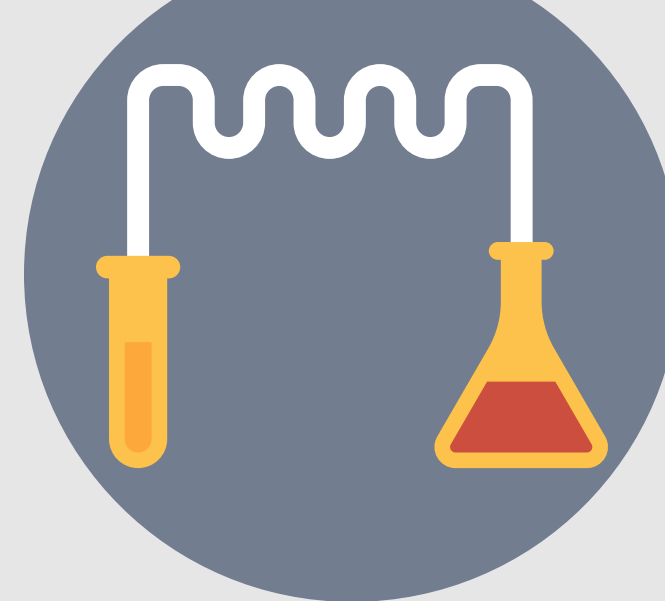


The ongoing opioid crisis in the United States has created a situation in which more and more people struggle with addiction.

Mandatory drug tests may mean you cannot hire otherwise qualified workers to fill open positions.



In theory, only hiring workers who can pass a drug test will help to ensure that the workforce is performing at their highest potential, not working under the influence of any drug.



A drug testing program could result in losing otherwise qualified employees who fail random drug tests but have not caused any issues.



A policy of mandatory drug testing can help the employer limit liability issues.

If an employer hires someone who poses a threat in some manner, and the employer could've known this by conducting a previous drug screening, the employer could be held liable.

If it can be shown that an employee was under the influence when he/she was injured or caused an accident, it may lessen the employers liability.



When implementing a drug testing policy, there will be another layer of legal rules to be aware of and follow - which often varies at the state level.

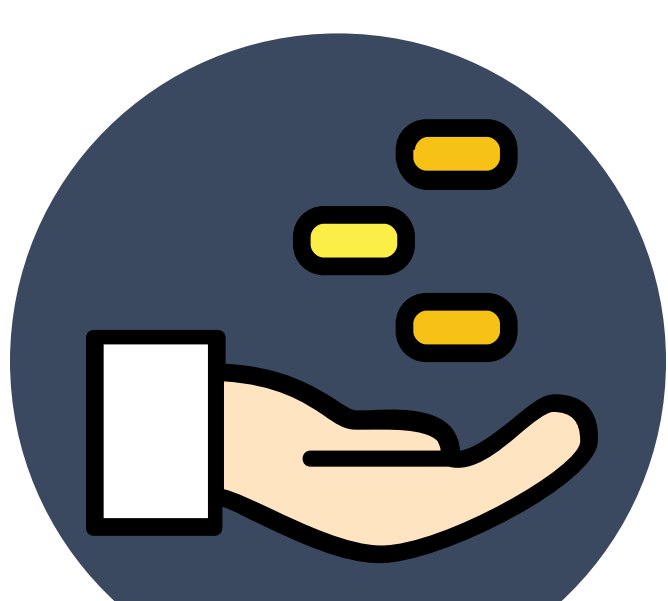
This opens the employer to push back and even lawsuits if employees feel they're being treated unfairly for any reason.



Having a drug testing policy in place may discourage employees from using any type of prohibited substance.



Marijuana use, medical or recreational, is legal in many states, but still illegal at the federal level. This can create a complicated situation for employers.

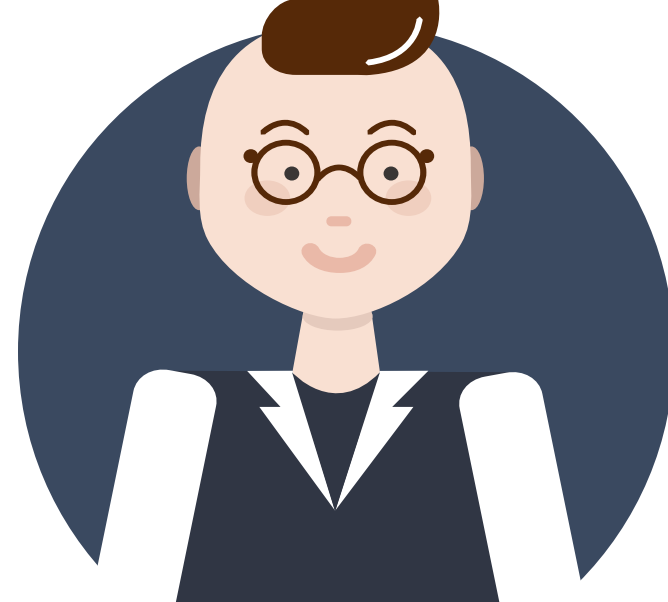


Implementing a program can reduce future costs like productivity loss, tardiness, absenteeism, increased healthcare premiums, etc., all of which could be related to employee drug use.



These programs cost money, and this cost is fully absorbed by the business. It's possible it could cost more than it saves.

This is especially true when there are ways to circumvent the system, which can reduce accuracy of the tests.

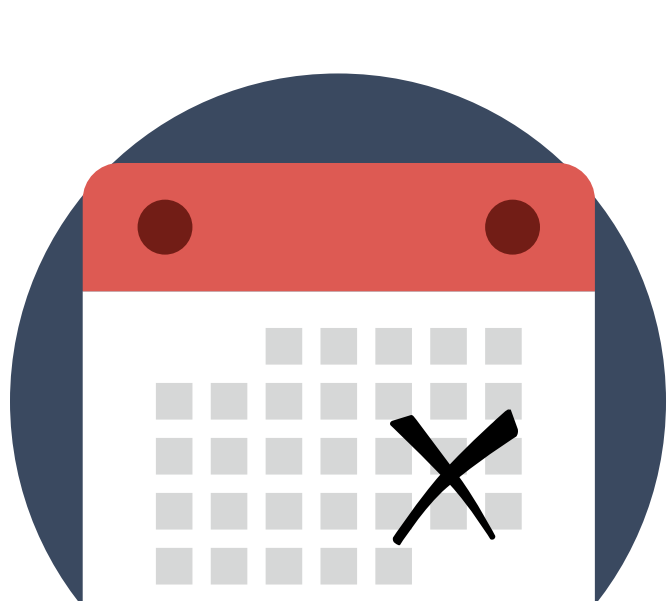


Many employees are happy to know that they're working in an environment that does not tolerate drug use and appreciate feeling protected by their employer.



Drug testing policies can erode employee morale, as they're often seen as evidence the employer does not trust it's employees.

They may also be seen as an intrusion on employee privacy - especially since employees may feel that their activities outside of work should have no bearing on their ability to remain employed.



By not hiring someone who has a drug problem, you'll be less likely to lose that employee quickly later on.

When viewed from this perspective, a drug testing program has the potential to reduce eventual turnover.



Employers should be aware that former addictions may be protected under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), depending on an individuals circumstances, so they should not go so far as to exclude anyone who has used illicit drugs in the past.

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