

Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace

Online
Training



Drug and alcohol abuse and addiction have a high toll on society, including in the workplace. Each year, employee drug and alcohol misuse cost to companies in the form of absenteeism, lower productivity, injuries, legal problems, and increased healthcare and insurance costs. For these reasons, corporations have a vested interest in addressing drug and alcohol problems in the workplace in order to protect both the health and wellbeing of their employees as well as company interests and profits.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (“OSHA”) requires employers to ensure, as far as practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of all their employees. OSHA does not expressly state that employers must develop and implement policies relating to alcohol and drug related problems. However, it is arguable that the obligation to ensure employees’ safety and health is wide enough to cover such issues. This interpretation would be in line with the guideline issued by the Department of Occupational Safety and Health, Ministry of Human Resources (“Guideline”) relating to drug and alcohol problems in the workplace.



How does drug and alcohol abuse affect the workplace?

Drug and alcohol use among employees affects the workplace, even when an employee is not actively abusing drugs or alcohol at work or coming to work under the influence of a substance. As a person’s addiction to drugs or alcohol advances, more areas of their life, functioning, and health are impacted, causing ripple effects that can begin to affect their job.

There are four main areas that are affected by drug and alcohol use in the workplace:

- Premature death, chronic health issues, and increased medical costs
- Increased risk for workplace injuries, accidents and non-work injuries
- Increased rates of absenteeism and overuse of sick and paid leave time
- Loss of productivity, impaired performance, and lower quality of work

These four main areas can cause a range of different problems for companies and corporations, including:

- Frequent tardiness and unreliable attendance
- Overuse of sick and paid leave days
- After-effects of substance use (hangover, withdrawal) affecting job performance
- Poor decision making
- Loss of efficiency and productivity
- Overall lowered quality of work
- Poorer workplace relationships
- Mood and behaviour problems that affect workplace culture and morale
- Trouble with attention and concentration to detail and completion of tasks
- Inappropriate behaviours in the workplace (hostility, anger outbursts, etc.)
- Higher turnover/training of new employees
- Disciplinary procedures



All GAM maintenance personnel shall be responsible to notify their immediate superior should they be or suspect any person of to be under influence of drugs or alcohol, physiological or psychological condition that may adversely affect the performance of their duties. He/she shall raise Safer Cards via GAMS Portal as per mention in SMS manual Part 8. Safety Reporting.

In 2018, the main trend of drug use in Malaysia has changed from opiate-based (heroin and morphine) to the Amphetamine-Type Stimulant (ATS) category. The use of ATS especially Methamphetamine and ATS tablets has substantially increased in recent years. In 2018, a total of 16,384 drug dependants were detected using methamphetamine (in crystalline and tablet forms), indicating an increase of 10.8% compared to 14,785 in 2017. In the same period, 7,746 drug dependants were detected using heroin and morphine compared to 10,154 drug dependants in year 2017, indicating a decrease of 23.7%. However, the use of ATS tablets (which includes methamphetamine tablets, ecstasy and amphetamine) have shown significant increase by 50.8% (1,152 drug dependants in 2018 compared to 764 drug dependants in 2017). Marijuana use indicates an increase about 5.3% for 2018 compared to the previous year (1,122 drug dependants in recent year compared to 1,066 in 2017).

Year	Opiate ¹	Marijuana	Methamphetamine (crystalline)	Methamphetamine (tablets)	Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) ²	Psychotropic Group ³	Others ⁴	Total
2013	16,041	1,885	2,901	107	369	18	40	21,361
2014	14,502	1,919	4,117	1,239	535	8	35	22,355
2015	16,616	1,389	8,133	674	635	7	25	27,479
2016	16,985	1,236	10,107	2,631	764	18	23	31,764
2017	10,154	1,066	10,419	4,366	764	9	13	26,791
2018	7,746	1,122	11,531	4,853	1,152	26	19	26,449

Number of drug dependants categorised by drug/substance group, Malaysia, 2013–2018

Notes:

1. Refers to Heroin & Morphine
2. Refers to Ecstasy & Amphetamine. Excludes also Methamphetamine type
3. Includes Benzodiazepine, Psychotropic pills & Eramine 5
4. Includes Kratom, Depression, Dissociative, Hallucinogens, Inhalant etc.
5. Preliminary of data
 - Data on the number of drugs used are not necessarily equal to the number of drug addicts. This is because drug addicts are poly drug users.
 - Source of Information from National Anti-Drugs Agency (NADA), Malaysia