

Alcohol and other drugs in the workplace policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this page must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Overview

The Department for Education (the department) aims to provide a world-class education for all children and young people in our schools and preschools. This means setting and expecting high standards of conduct and behaviour from all staff to ensure that each employee is fully fit and able to deliver quality services.

This policy provides clarity around the department's attitude to and management of the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs in the workplace.

This policy aims to:

- ensure student and employee safety
- maintain professional standards and the reputation of the department
- prevent the inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs at work
- manage the conduct and behaviour of employees appropriately
- manage the impact of inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs on an employee's performance

This policy provides a framework:

- for the consistent, effective and fair management of employees whose work is impacted by their use of alcohol, drugs or both
- that appropriately and respectfully supports employees when addressing health issues associated with the abuse or misuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Scope

This policy applies to all department employees (site based and corporate). It also includes weekly paid and claim paid employees, and all employed under the:

- *Education and Children's Services Act 2019*
- *Public Sector Act 2009*.

Detail

To provide world-class education, all our employees must be at their best.

Individual performance, and the safety of our people, may be adversely impacted by alcohol and other drugs. This may include:

- delayed reactions
- impaired cognitive functions
- decreased ability to concentrate and communicate.

It's also recognised that regular or heavy consumption of alcohol and other drugs can result in a range of longer term psychological, social and medical problems for individuals. This could lead to:

- an impact on work attendance
- deterioration of skills
- interpersonal difficulties
- diminished wellbeing.

In addition, it's acknowledged that for some people the misuse of drugs and alcohol can result in addiction, which is not a personal choice but rather a health issue. Therefore, the department will approach the management of misuse or abuse of drugs and alcohol from the perspective of supporting rehabilitation, where appropriate.

The expectations of this policy guide employee behaviour.

Duty of care

The department and all employees have duty of care responsibilities.

Employees who work with children and young people have an increased responsibility to take reasonable steps to make sure no harm comes to those in their care. Those employees must:

- uphold the values and expectations of the community
- act as positive role models for children and young people.

The expectations set out in this policy reflect these duty of care responsibilities.

Maintaining a safe workplace

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)* establishes the workplace health and safety duties of employers and employees. This includes a primary duty to protect any person in the workplace from exposure to hazards and risks that arise from work.

This obligation includes managing risk that may arise from employee use of alcohol, other drugs or both to individuals in the workplace.

Where alcohol or other drug abuse or misuse is known or suspected, the department will initially focus on ensuring the safety of the individual, as well as students and other employees.

Expectations

Department expectations relating to alcohol and other drugs in the workplace, including when working from home, are:

Illicit drugs

No employee is permitted to be affected by illicit drugs at any time during work hours, nor are they permitted to possess, solicit, produce or sell illicit drugs.

Alcohol

- Employees must at all times present for duty unimpaired by alcohol.
- Employees must not consume alcohol where they are directly responsible for children or young people, or at an official student event.
- Alcohol must not be consumed at the workplace during the employee's normal working hours.
- An exception to the consumption of alcohol at the workplace may be if management have expressly approved alcohol to be consumed at a defined function (see section [ensuring a safe environment](#)).
- All employees must have a blood alcohol concentration of zero whilst operating machinery.

Prescribed or over the counter medication

Prescribed and over the counter medication may affect an employee's behaviour or ability to perform their duties. Employees are expected to discuss their circumstances with their manager to make sure their duties can be performed safely.

Reporting

All employees are expected to promptly report to their manager any health and safety concerns or behaviour related to suspected drug or alcohol use by other employees.

Criminal charges or traffic offences

If an employee is charged with drug or alcohol offences they must advise their manager at the earliest possible opportunity (or if their manager is not available, another relevant person in management).

The matter must then be referred to the Incident Management Directorate for assessment and appropriate action.

Ensuring a safe environment

Where it's reasonable to suspect that an employee may be adversely affected by alcohol or drugs, they will not be allowed to commence work, continue working, or return to work until cleared for work (that is, without drug or alcohol impairment).

Police must be contacted if an employee is suspected of possession, supply, or use of an illegal substance or drug paraphernalia on any departmental site.

Where it's expressly approved by leadership that alcohol may be consumed on a worksite, general principles for the responsible service of alcohol must be applied.

The provision or consumption of alcohol at departmental events attended by children and young people is generally not appropriate and can only occur with the express approval of the leader or appropriate delegate. Also refer to the [catering, entertainment and gifts instruction for schools and preschools](#).

Managing issues in the workplace

Where an employee presents as adversely affected by alcohol or drugs, or otherwise breaches the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector, the department will manage the matter in line with the relevant policy and procedures.

Anyone involved in the management of issues relating to alcohol and drug use, including any resulting disciplinary or grievance process, are responsible for appropriately managing confidential information relating to any report, incident, injury or illness. This does not stop the sharing of relevant information within and outside of the department as required to ensure appropriate management of the issue.

Roles and responsibilities

Executive Director, People and Culture

Make sure this policy and associated guideline is communicated and implemented across the department.

Director, Employee Relations

Develop supportive information to facilitate awareness and implementation across the department.

Monitor issues escalated centrally to ensure the policy position is appropriate and effective.

Leaders

Make sure:

- all employees within their responsibility are aware of the expectations under this policy and the associated guideline

- that employees within their responsibility who are adversely affected in the workplace by their use of alcohol or other drugs, or in possession of such substances, are managed according to this policy and associated guideline.

Definitions

drug

A chemical substance, whether it is legal or illegal, that may have the ability to impair a person's physical or mental capacity.

illegal or illicit drugs

Those drugs for which production, sale, possession or use is prohibited by law. For example, cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy, cocaine, heroin, prescription drugs that have not been obtained legally or are not being used for medicinal purposes.

substance misuse or abuse

Substance abuse occurs with the excessive use or misuse of a drug beyond its intended purpose or prescription. The most commonly abused substances are alcohol and prescription drugs. All use of illegal drugs is considered substance abuse.

leader

A department employee with the delegated overall management of a department school, preschool, centre, regional office or corporate unit.

manager

A department employee who has line management responsibilities.

Supporting information

Related legislation

[Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2012 \(SA\) \(PDF 803KB\)](#)

Related policies

[Alcohol and other drugs in the workplace management guideline](#)

[Catering, entertainment and gifts policy](#)

[Catering, entertainment and gifts instruction for schools and preschools](#)

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