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Here is your February newsletter from East Bay. We want to stay in touch and keep you updated on occupational medicine topics that are important to you--- information you can use. If you have any questions about one of the topics presented or suggestions for future email newsletters, please let us know. We believe in sharing our knowledge and resources with you.



Workplace Overdose Deaths Increasing

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that there were 64,000 deaths due to drug overdoses in the U.S. last year. That correlates to about 90 deaths per day.

This trend carries over to the workplace. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there has been a 30% increase in the number of deaths at work due to drug overdoses. These are unintentional overdoses. This increased from 165 in 2015 to 217 in 2016. Since 2011, the number of workplace deaths due to unintentional overdoses has **tripled**.

The explosion of prescription opioids (Vicodin/Norco, Percocet) along with cheaper heroin has driven this trend. Heroin is often cut with cheaper narcotics (Fentanyl, Carfentanil) by drug dealers in an effort to make more money. The overdoses are occurring because a drug user may think he or she is using their usual amount of heroin but, if it has been cut with a more potent narcotic, the user is unaware and overdoses. It causes death by respiratory suppression. They quit breathing. You have probably heard of law enforcement using Narcan to reverse opioid overdoses. It works on the opioid receptors in the brain. Unfortunately, it isn't always effective.

This makes it all the more important to know what your employees are doing while at work. East Bay offers training to



help supervisors and other employees spot potentially impaired coworkers. Consider:

- Supervisor training for drug/alcohol impairment
- Employee education on drug and alcohol abuse
- Ensure your company drug and alcohol testing policy is up to date and reviewed by all employees



Again, we highly recommend that your employees review your drug and alcohol testing policy and sign that they understand the policy. If you need any assistance with policy drafting or review, please let us know.

Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Policies

The importance of having a thorough, up-to-date company policy is crucial. With the advent of medical and, potentially, recreational marijuana, rampant opioid abuse and the everpresent specter of alcohol abuse, your company needs a thoughtful, defensible policy.

Addressing medical and recreational marijuana, as well as legally prescribed drugs (amphetamines, opioids), is key.

Other issues to consider:

- What about "safety sensitive" positions in your company (as defined by DOT or your company)?
- What about "security sensitive" positions?
- What are the consequences of violating the policy?
- Who is covered?
- What if a negative test is dilute?
- What if there is a refusal to test or a positive test?
- Who carries out and enforces the policy?
- What part would a collective bargaining agreement play?



East Bay administers both DOT and non DOT drug and alcohol testing consortia. As consortium members, East Bay will help you draft and review drug and alcohol testing policies.

See the links below for drug free workplace and drug and alcohol policy suggestions:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/workplace/toolkit>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/workplace/toolkit/develop-policy>

TC Businesses Battle Opioids

A recent edition of the Traverse City Business News, Healthcare Section, ran a story about the opioid abuse crisis in Traverse City and local companies' difficulties hiring employees. This problem is not unique to TC nor is it limited to pre-employment testing. Numerous studies have shown that approximately 75% of drug users are employed.

Source: TCBN, 11/2017

What are opioids? They are a class of synthetic narcotics (Hydrocodone/Oxycodone) resembling naturally occurring opiates (Morphine/Codeine).

According to the CDC, where do people get opioids?

- Friend/Relative 55%
- Physician 17.3%
- Bought from Friend/Relative 11.4%
- Other 7.1%
- Stolen from Friend/Relative 4.8%
- Drug Dealer/Stranger 4.4%

Research shows that 6% of opioid naive users will become addicted. Considering the large volume of opioid prescriptions written, it affects many people and their families.

So, what are companies to do? Pre-employment drug testing offers a solution. The pros and cons of pre-employment drug testing have been widely debated but there is no question that the pros far outweigh the cons. To identify a drug issue in the hiring phase is far better than experiencing a work related injury or fatality due to unrecognized workplace drug abuse. It is much cheaper, as well. Lower liability costs and work comp premiums, better employee morale, and better quality service and products result. It also acts as a deterrent for potential employees who know in advance that your company promotes a drug free workplace.

In addition, a drug free workplace includes random, reasonable suspicion, post accident, and return to duty drug and alcohol testing. Along with supervisor and employee education, each of these is an important part of a drug testing program. East Bay can help you keep your workplace drug free.

Drug and Alcohol Consulting Services

If you're like most employers, you have questions about drug and alcohol tests, medications your employees take, safety sensitive issues, and drug use in the workplace. East Bay Medical is a full-service occupational health practice. We are available 24/7 for questions from our clients. This consulting aspect of our practice is an extremely important part of what we do to help our clients.



Other Offerings

What else does your company need?

East Bay offers many onsite services. We offer on-site DOT physical exams, on-site random drug testing, flu shots, as well as on-site employee and supervisor training for drug and alcohol abuse.

We also offer work injury evaluations and treatment, spirometry, hearing tests, agility testing, vaccinations, including tetanus and Hepatitis B Virus, and testing for tuberculosis.

Please let us know if you're interested in any of these additional services.



The preceding articles are provided for educational purposes only and do not constitute legal advice.

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to serve you and hope that East Bay is bringing you pertinent information that you can use. We are always happy to answer questions and assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,

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