Employment-Related Drug & Alcohol Testing

Our clinics are busy each day with work-related drug and alcohol testing; we perform thousands of collections every year. It’s an area with a fair amount of liability for our customers, so we thought a revisit of the basics might be in order.

The drug testing world is divided into two worlds; DOT-regulated and non-DOT. If your company has positions (e.g. truck drivers, passenger van operators) which require individuals to carry a DOT medical card they may also be subject to the DOT drug screening rules. If they are, the DOT prescribes exactly when a urine drug screen/ breath alcohol test needs to be performed. The rules are inflexible and easy to understand and administer. Things get more complicated in the non-DOT world, where company policy governs.

Non-DOT urine drug testing may cover a variety of circumstances; new hires, reasonable suspicion, post-accident, etc. Testing for alcohol may also be done depending upon the circumstance. The method may take several forms: breath alcohol, part of the urine drug screen or via blood draw. Minnesota Statute contains rules that apply not only to employers, but also to the lab doing the testing. The statute requires the testing lab to conduct a confirmatory test on all samples that produce a positive result on an initial screening test. For all samples that produced a positive test result, the lab is required to retain and store the samples for six months. A breath test doesn’t produce a sample that the lab can retain, so breath testing doesn’t allow the testing lab to meet the requirements of the statute.

Rapid testing is another option available to employers. 5 and 10 panel rapid tests exist which allow us to report definitively to you, in 10-15 minutes, whether the specimen is negative for the presence of the 5 or 10 illegal substances. If it’s non-negative the specimen goes on to the lab for full analysis.

In our experience, one of the most commonly misunderstood areas of drug testing is the concept of post-accident testing. Does there need to be an accident? What constitutes an accident? What if there was no bodily harm but damage to company property? What if the employee reported that their wrist hurts due to work and they want to see a physician? We interpret and implement post-accident drug testing as any first work injury visit, regardless of the reason or how much time has elapsed between the date of injury and the date of the first clinic visit. We go to great lengths to discuss this when accounts are established. If you’re not sure about how your account may be set up or have questions please let us know.

All complete-package urine drug screening accounts established through HealthPartners include collection, lab analysis and final decision re: negative or positive by a Medical Review Officer (MRO). The MRO is the only entity capable of determining if a specimen is positive or not. The decision will be emailed to the company contact designated when the account was established.

Occupational Health Nurse Capabilities

Occupational Health Nurses (OHN) are professional nurses who specialize in providing services to companies, typically in the workplace. The goal of retaining the services of an OHN is to reduce costs; through reductions in OSHA-recordable injuries, better management of work injuries and focus on prevention of injuries/illness. Examples of the services they provide are:

- First aid services for workplace injuries,
- Flu shots/vaccinations,
- Assisting supervisors in accommodating & managing work restrictions for employees treating for work injuries,
- FMLA administration,
- Ergonomic consulting,
- Injury prevention classes,
- Wellness resource for workforce,

If you’d like to explore an OHN engagement at your firm please contact Kirk Hyatt at 952-541-2619.
HealthPartners Teams Up with Harvard

SafeWell research project to focus on improving workplace wellness and safety. HealthPartners will be participating in a year-long research project, SafeWell, looking to improve the health, safety and well-being of three Minnesota employers, Buhler Inc., TURCK, Inc. and Quality Bicycle Products.

SafeWell is a collaboration between HealthPartners and the Harvard School of Public Health Center for Work, Health, and Well-being. The project integrates wellness and safety at the workplace, looking to improve the environment for employees. Research demonstrates that keeping workers healthy, reducing risk of chronic disease, and protecting workers from hazardous work conditions, results in improved worker health outcomes, and may reduce health care and business costs.

Employees at each location will learn more about wellness and safety at their workplace, including:

- Learning safe ways to move, sit and lift
- Dealing with stress better, both at work and at home
- Getting extra support from managers to encourage healthy behaviors

The year-long pilot program will be integrated into the well-being program currently offered by each company, adding additional events, activities, communication and management consultation.