

# ***SUBSTANCE USE & IMPAIRMENT***

## **IN THE WORKPLACE**

**Workplace safety matters.** Everyone deserves to go home safe at the end of the day. That means taking impairment seriously and responding in ways that are fair, respectful and evidence-based.

Impairment can have many causes, including illness, pain, fatigue, stress, workplace conditions, and substance use. What's most important around impairment in the workplace is whether a worker can do their job safely, and what support is needed when they cannot.

Too often, workplaces treat impairment related to substance use differently from other causes of impairment. This can drive increased stigma, suspicion, and discipline, even while other serious safety risks, like exhaustion or stress, are normalized in the workplace.

Workplace responses are most effective when they focus on actual safety, early support, and accurate assessment. A more consistent approach can reduce stigma and make it less likely that workplace responses will make a difficult situation worse.

**Safe workplaces need clear, fair, evidence-based policies that focus on impairment, protect dignity, and support workers before problems become crises.**

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## **IN THE WORKPLACE**

### **Safety, Support, and Fairness at Work**

Many behaviours associated with substance use, such as slower reaction time, trouble concentrating, or reduced alertness, can also be caused by fatigue, stress, illness, or other workplace conditions. Workplace responses should focus on impairment and safety, not assumptions about cause.

Workers may be impaired for many reasons, including fatigue, illness, pain, stress, mental health, or substance use. But impairment linked to substance use is often treated as a special threat before a worker's ability to work safely has been accurately assessed. A better response focuses on safety, support, and reducing risk.

Testing and other forms of employer surveillance are often presented as safety solutions, but they do not necessarily measure actual impairment on the job. They can increase stigma, invade privacy, and impose costly monitoring that goes beyond the response to other forms of impairment.

**We can build safe workplaces through consistent, evidence-based responses to impairment.** That means reducing stigma, challenging unsafe conditions, and supporting approaches that protect dignity, fairness, prevention, and safety.

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