

Drug Prevention and Assistance for Employees and Students

Like many prescription drugs, "recreational" drugs come with potentially harmful side effects that can have serious and long-term effects on your health.

For healthcare professionals as well as those who work in healthcare settings and academic institutions it can mean the loss of employment. For those who voluntarily seek help for addiction or if they believe they may be having a problem, VCOM is committed to assisting that employee or student to be successful. For employees or students who do not self identify or voluntarily seek help, VCOM must take the action of dismissal as those individuals are a risk to other employees, the institution, and the public, VCOM has a zero tolerance policy to the use of illegal drugs.

Drugs are related to crime in multiple ways. Most directly, it is a crime to use, possess, manufacture, or distribute drugs classified as having a potential for abuse (such as cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and amphetamines). Drugs are also related to crime through the effects they have on the user's behavior and by generating violence and other illegal activity in connection with drug trafficking. The chart listed below is from the HHS website showing the risks associated with drug use.

Summary of relationship between drugs and crime		
<u>Drugs/crime relationship</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Examples</u>
Drug-defined offenses	Violations of laws prohibiting or regulating the possession, use, distribution, or manufacture of illegal drugs.	Drug possession or use. Marijuana cultivation. Methamphetamine production. Cocaine, heroin, or marijuana sales.
Drug-related offenses	Offenses to which a drug's pharmacologic effects contribute; offenses motivated by the user's need for money to support continued use; and offenses connected to drug distribution itself.	Violent behavior resulting from drug effects. Stealing to get money to buy drugs. Violence against rival drug dealers.
Drug-using lifestyle	A lifestyle in which the likelihood and frequency of involvement in illegal activity are increased because drug users may not participate in the legitimate economy and are exposed to situations that encourage crime.	A life orientation with an emphasis on short-term goals supported by illegal activities. Opportunities to offend resulting from contacts with offenders and illegal markets. Criminal skills learned from other offenders.

Recent years drug and crime tracking evidence indicates that drug users are more likely than nonusers to commit crimes, that arrestees frequently were under the influence of a drug at the time they committed their offense, and that drugs generate violence.

Health Risks Related to Drugs

To understand the policy it is important to note that High doses of many of the drugs, or impure or more dangerous substitutes for these drugs, can cause immediate life-threatening health problems such as **heart attack, respiratory failure, and coma**. Combining drugs with each other or with alcohol is especially dangerous.

- Barbiturates and tranquilizers are commonly abused prescription drugs. They can cause hangover-like symptoms, nausea, seizures, and coma. Overdose or mixing these drugs with alcohol can be fatal.
- Cocaine can cause such long-term problems as tremors, seizures, psychosis, and heart or respiratory failure.
- LSD can cause nausea, rapid heart rate, depression, and disorientation. Long-term effects include paranoia and psychosis.
- Marijuana and hashish can cause rapid heart rate and memory impairment soon after use. Long-term effects include cognitive problems, infertility, weakened immune system, and possible lung damage.
- Narcotics such as heroin can bring on respiratory and circulatory depression, dizziness, impotence, constipation, and withdrawal sickness. Overdoses can lead to seizures and death.
- PCP, in addition to triggering unpredictable and violent behavior, can cause dizziness, numbness, high heart rate and blood pressure, convulsions, and in high amounts fatal heart and lung failure or ruptured blood vessels.
- Stimulants such as amphetamines have health effects that include high heart rate and blood pressure, headache, blurred vision, dizziness, impotence, skin disorders, tremors, seizures, and psychosis.

If an employee or student believes he or she may have a problem with being able to stop the use of drugs, he or she may self identify (without retribution) to the Associate Vice President of Student Services (students) or Human Resources (employees) for referral for assessment and treatment.

An employee or student who is identified to be participating in illegal drug usage or who is believed to be addicted and not seeking help will be deemed a risk to the public, the institution, and fellow employees and students and will be discharged immediately. Any employee or student who is participating in the use of drugs are therefore encouraged to self identify and seek help through the above recommended offices.