## STUDY UNIT 11: ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE:

## INTRODUCTION

Drug refers to any synthetic or natural chemical substance (other than food or nutrients) that when taken brings about changes in a body or in mind or both. In simple terms a drug is any substance that affects or changes our feelings, thoughts and eventually affects our behaviors as well. Drugs are harmful and make users harmful to others.

**Drug addiction**; Refers to having uncontrollable abnormal need or desire for a drug whether it is alcohol, nicotine (tobacco) or illegal narcotic substances. In strict sense refers to physical dependence on drugs or is any bio-psycho-social dependence on mood altering substances.

**Drug abuse;** Refers to excessive or addictive use of mood altering drugs for non-medical purposes. In other words any drug that is used for too without reasons and in excess doses is being abused. The drugs abused affect employees' mind, senses, moods and emotions.

**Learning Outcomes of Study Unit 111**

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

10.1 Define the concept of alcohol and drug abuse

10.2 Give different types of alcohol and drug abuse

10.3 Identify different signs and symptoms of alcohol and drug abuse

10.4 Examine the causes of alcohol and drug abuse

10.5 Discuss the steps to a Drug free workplace

***Other definitions of Terms*:**

Current illicit drug user: Someone who has used illicit drugs at least once in the last month {Illicit - illegal/prohibited)

Binge drinking: Five or more drinks on one occasion (Binge - overdo)

Heavy drinking: Five or more drinks on five or more occasions in the past month

# 11.2 Types of drug abuse

Drugs are usually classified according to practical reasons to primary effects that they have on the central nervous system. These three types of drugs include:

**Stimulative** (**upper**): These are agents that stimulate or excite the central nervous system (CNS). They are referred to as the uppers or speed as they revise up the vital functions and produce a mental state associated with heights awareness and elevated moods like Amphetamines, sliming tablets, cocaine, caffeine, nicotine, khat, esxstancy etc.

**Depressants:** These have primary effects on depressing the functions of CNS. They are therefore referred to as downers ego Alcohol, heroin, morphine, wellconals, barbiturates, mandrax, etc.

**Hallucinogens:** These distorts functions of the CNS, by creating changes in perceptions that range from sensory illusion, sight, hearing, smelling, taste to out-right. Hallucinogens drugs include: - dagga, hashish, marijuana (cannabis), some fungi seeds .etc.

**Common drugs:**

* **Narcotics** include opium, heroine, dilaudid and methadone
* **Depressants** like methaqualone, valium, xanax,Phenobarbital etc.
* **Stimulants** like crack powdered cocaine, met amphetamine etc.
* **Inhalants:** opium, heroine, dilaudid, methadone, glue, spirit, petrol etc.
* **Hallucinogens:** LSDPeyote, psilocybin, mushrooms and PCP
* **Marijuana:** hash oil, hashish, marijuana etc.
* **Alcohol:** beer, wine, whisky, vodka, waragi or gin, PCP, angel duff.

### How drugs are abused

* Through big injections
* Smoking
* Sniffing
* Boiling
* Drinking
* Chewing etc.

## 10.3 Symptoms

The following performance and behavior problems are common to many employed individuals who abuse alcohol and/or other drugs. It is important to note that if an employee displays these symptoms, it does not necessarily mean he or she has a substance abuse problem.

**(i) Performance**

* inconsistent work quality
* Poor concentration
* Lowered productivity
* Increased absenteeism
* Unexplained disappearances from the jobsite
* Carelessness, mistakes
* Errors in judgment
* Needless risk taking
* Disregard for safety
* Extended lunch periods and early departures

**(ii) Behavior**

* Frequent financial problems
* Avoidance of friends and colleagues
* Blaming others for own problems and shortcomings
* Complaints about problems at home
* Deterioration 'in personal appearance
* Complaints end excuses of vaguely-defined illnesses

## 11.3.1 Signs of Drug abuse at workplace

If you see more than one of these signs in your employee, there is a chance he   
or she is using drugs.

* Changes in attendance (i.e. missing' work, tardiness)
* Change in job performance
* Changes in overall' attitude or personality
* Sudden outbreaks of anger
* Changes (deterioration) of physical appearance or grooming'
* Money or equipment missing from workplace
* Complaints from co-workers or customers about employee's attitude or behavior
* Missing work deadlines
* Shying away from responsibility

***Other behavior-related signs of substance abuse may include:***

* Sleepiness
* Slurred speech
* Unsteady movements and shaky hands
* Cold, sweaty palms
* Dilated pupils
* Red eyes
* Unusual weight loss or gain
* Smell of alcohol Oil breath
* Deteriorating family relationships
* Borrowing money from co-workers
* Stealing from the company and co-workers
* Sudden change in choice of friends
* Poor personal hygiene
* Violent behavior
* Impatience
* Depression
* Suspicious attitude toward others
* Emotional behavior
* Excessive talkativeness
* Safety Hazards
* Risky behavior
* Increased involvement in off-the-job accidents
* Damaging equipment or property

# 11.4 CAUSES OF DRUG ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM AT WORK PLACE

-Permissiveness that is people tend to do whatever pleases them no matter whether they affect them or other people.

-Peer influence that is people want to be like their friends

-Weak government policies

-Family background

-Unemployment

-Curiosity

-Frustrations in life

-Idleness and Redundancy

-Work overload

-Ignorance about the dangers of drug abuse

**Conclusion**

Substance abusing employees are not safe employees. Depending on the type of work employees do, substance abuse problems can begin manifesting themselves in employee safety records. Substance abusing employees will be involved in more accidents than other workers, even though they are often not the ones who are injured.

They also tend to display carelessness in the operation and maintenance of potentially hazardous materials or dangerous equipment. The most important thing employers can do to help control the cost of substance abuse is to establish and enforce a policy that prohibits employees from using illegal drugs and abusing legal drugs or alcohol.

Employers should train supervisors to monitor workers' job performance and to report any irregularities. However, supervisors should not be expected to diagnose possible medical conditions, such as substance abuse. Employers should also offer employees ongoing substance abuse education opportunities so that everyone in the workplace can be on the look-out for the hidden signs of substance abuse.

# 11.5 Steps to a Drug-Free Workplace

To protect against the negative impact of workplace drug and alcohol abuse,   
many businesses implement drug-free workplace programs. A comprehensive   
program generally includes five components:

* Drug-Free Workplace Policy
* Supervisor Training
* Employee Education
* Employee Assistance
* Drug Testing

**Below is a brief summary of what each of the five components entails.**

**Component 1: Writing a Drug-Free Workplace Policy**

A written drug-free workplace policy is the foundation of an organization’s drug- free workplace program. Every organization's' written policy should be, unique and tailored to meet its specific needs; however, all effective policies have a few aspects in common.

First, a written policy should clearly state why the policy or drug-free workplace program is being implemented. Rationale can be as simple as a company being committed to protecting the safety, health and well-being of its employees and patrons and recognizing that abuse of alcohol and other drugs compromises this dedication.

The second core 'element of an effective written policy is a clear description of behaviors that are prohibited. At a minimum, this should include a statement that the "use, possession, transfer or .sale of illegal drugs or controlled substances by employees is prohibited."

The third fundamental element is p thorough explanation of the consequences for violating the policy. Consequences may include discipline up to and including termination and/or referral for assistance. Consequences should be consistent with other existing personnel policies and procedures and any applicable state laws.

Employers should note that sharing their policy with all company employees is an Essential part of a drug-free workplace program. Many companies find it helpful to ask for feedback from employees during the initial policy development stage.

**Component 2: Supervisor Training**

After developing a written drug-free workplace policy, an organization should train those individuals closest to the workforce - supervisors. Supervisor training is an integral part of every drug-free workplace program. At· a minimum, supervisor training should include a review of:

**Supervisors' specific responsibilities in implementing the policy**

In relation to an organization's drug-free workplace program, supervisors' responsibilities should include monitoring employees' job performance, staying alert to performance problems, documenting performance problem and enforcing the policy. Supervisors should not, however, be expected to diagnose alcohol- and drug-related problems or provide counseling to employees who may have them. Rather, training should focus on ensuring that supervisors:

* Understand the company's drug-free workplace policy
* Can identify and attempt to resolve employee performance problems
* Know how to refer employees to available assistance

In addition, if supervisors are responsible for making referrals for testing based on reasonable suspicion, they must also be thoroughly trained on .how to make that determination.

**Component 3: Employee Education**

A drug and alcohol education program is a systematic approach to providing' employees with the information they need to fully understand, cooperate with and benefit from their organization's drug free workplace program. Effective employee education program provide company specific information, such as details of the drug free workplace policy and program, as well as more generalized information about the nature of alcohol and drug abuse; its impact on work performance, health and personal and family life; and what types of help are available for individuals with alcohol and drug related problems, either through the organization or community - based service providers.

All company employees should be required to participate in the drug and alcohol   
education program. The message should be delivered on an ongoing basis through a variety of means, not as a one-time effort. Forums for employee education may include home mailings, posters and displays in the workplace, brown-bag lunches, guest speakers, seminars 'and sessions at new employee orientation.

**Component 4: Providing Employee Assistance**

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are an extremely effective vehicle for addressing and resolving poor workplace performance that may stem from an employee's personal problems,

including alcohol and drug abuse.

In addition to short-term counseling and referrals, many EAPs offer additional drug and alcohol related services that benefit employees and the company, such as supervisor training and employee education. Businesses with financial constraints may be able to join a consortium to offer their workers EAP services or at a minimum, should provide a resource file from which employees can access information about treatment programs and help lines.

EAPs are an excellent benefit to employees and their families: They clearly demonstrate employers' responsiveness and respect for their staff. EAPs also offer an "alternative to dismissal and minimize an employer's legal vulnerability because they clearly show a company's effort to accommodate troubled employees.

**Component 5: Alcohol and Drug Testing**

Despite their controversial nature alcohol and drug tests are increasingly standard components of many drug-free workplace programs. However, before deciding whether or not to include testing as part of their organization's program, employers should consider a number of factors:

* Who will be tested? Possibilities include all employees, job applicants and/or   
  employees in safety-sensitive positions.
* When will tests be conducted? Possibilities include pre-employment, upon   
  reasonable suspicion or for cause, post-accident, randomly, periodically and post   
  rehabilitation.
* Which drugs will be tested for? Possibilities include the five drugs required for   
  testing by many government agencies (marijuana, opiates, amphetamines and   
  cocaine) or a broader range of substances, including alcohol or prescription   
  drugs.
* How will tests be conducted? A number of testing modes ore available, including urinalysis, saliva tests, hair tests, breath-alcohol tests, sweat 'patches and blood tests. It is essential that employers familiarize themselves with existing local, and government laws that may impact when, where and how drug' and alcohol testing is performed. It is strongly recommended that legal counsel be sought prior to implementing any testing program.