

## TOOLKIT ON IMPAIRMENT AND WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY

The legalization of recreational cannabis has highlighted the potential issue of workplace impairment. Since the effects of cannabis can last for 4-6 hours, and potentially up to 24 hours, all employees must ensure that they are fit for work.

Workers who are unfit or unable to carry out their work safely due to impairment introduce a hazard to the workplace, themselves, and others. Hazards may arise from a worker's impairment due to the use of various substances (e.g. alcohol, prescription and non-prescription medication, medical and recreational cannabis and other substances, such as fentanyl and opioids). This is particularly important for workers performing duties where impairment can result in serious injury, for example driving, operating heavy equipment, working with chemicals etc.

Ontario has strict rules in place to make sure workplaces are safe. With respect to the recent legalization of cannabis, Ontario has developed a balanced and responsible approach to recreational cannabis, which includes ensuring the continued protection of worker health and safety in the province's workplaces. Specifically, that [Medical cannabis](#) will continue to be subject to different rules **than recreational cannabis**, **AND Consuming recreational cannabis in the workplace remains illegal** after legalization on October 17, 2018.

The University's focus continues to be on the health and safety of our community. As stated in the [University of Waterloo Approach to Cannabis Legalization Q&A](#):

**"Employees must be fit for work at all times, and working under the influence of cannabis or any substance will not be tolerated.** An employee who appears to be under the influence will be sent home via taxi and scheduled to meet with their supervisor and Human Resources the following day."

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), we all have a role to play in protecting workplace health and safety. Workers are required to take specific steps if they encounter a hazard arising from workplace impairment due to substance use. Workers must inform their supervisor immediately if they suspect another worker is impaired and posing a risk to health and safety.

### Employers

- Are required to address workplace hazards, under the Ontario [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(OHSA\)](#). *Supervisors have a specific duty to monitor the work for which they are responsible, and address hazards that they identify or that are reported to them.*

### Employees

- Have a duty to perform work safely and to report any hazards to their supervisor or employer under OHSA
- Report workers who are unable or unfit to work safely and could be a hazard to themselves or to others in the workplace.

The Fit for Work Guideline sets out how the University will address workplace impairment and the procedures that supervisors and the employer will follow. To assist supervisors in identifying potential workplace impairment, this toolkit provides guidance on indicators that may be present.

## **Addressing Problematic Substance Use that Impacts the Workplace** from the Atlantic Canada Council on Addiction (ACCA)

It is important to remember the following:

- They may be different from person to person
- When used alone or in combination, they do not necessarily mean that somebody has a substance use problem. However, they may be indicators that your employee is in trouble or in need of some help (regardless of whether the issue stems from problematic substance use of another cause).

The signs and symptom below are only guidelines; there can be many reasons that explain these situations, such as:

- Another disability or temporary medical condition
- Conflict at work
- Job dissatisfaction or low morale
- The stress experienced in balancing work and caregiving obligations
- Personal problems unrelated to work

Employers should always remember that the employee might just be having a bad week or month. However, in some cases, the observed behaviour may be related to substance use/abuse.

### **Physical Indicators:**

- Deterioration in appearance and/or personal hygiene
- Unexplained bruises
- Sweating
- Complaints of headaches
- Tremors
- Diarrhea and vomiting
- Abdominal/muscle cramps
- Restlessness
- Frequent use of breath mints/gum or mouthwash
- Odour of alcohol on breath
- Slurred speech
- Unsteady gait

### **Psychosocial Impact Indicators:**

- Family disharmony (i.e. how the colleagues speak of family members)
- Mood fluctuations (i.e. swinging from being extremely fatigued to “perkiness” in a short period of time)
- Inappropriate verbal or emotional response
- Confusing or memory lapses
- Inappropriate responses/behaviours
- Isolation from colleagues
- Lack of focus/concentration and forgetfulness
- Lying and/or providing implausible excuses for behaviour

### **Workplace Performance and Professional image Indicators:**

- Calling in sick frequently (may work overtime)
- Moving to a position where there is less visibility or supervision
- Arriving late for work, leaving early
- Extended breaks; sometimes without telling colleagues they are leaving
- Forgetfulness
- Errors in judgement
- Deterioration in performance
- Excessive number of incidents/mistakes
- Non-compliance with policies, guidelines, processes
- Doing enough work to just “get by”
- Sloppy, illegible or incorrect work (i.e. writing reports, etc.)
- Changes in work quality