

WISE In The ACT Inc.
DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY
FOR THE SEX INDUSTRY WORKPLACE

The cost in human terms of alcohol and drug dependency has rarely, if ever, been addressed appropriately by any industry. The sex industry is in an ideal position to implement sensible, safe policies that will protect both the worker and the operator, as well as setting precedents for other marginalised industries to ensure the safety of their workers.

Whilst most brothel operators claim to have a total ban on drug use and drug users in their workplace, the reality is that all brothels, at one time or another, have employed users of alcohol and other drugs. Drugs are a fact of life for our society, and the sex industry is made up of people from all sections of society; some who use alcohol and other drugs, and some who do not.

Whether or not a worker uses alcohol and/or other drugs in their personal life is of no concern to an employer/operator, so long as the use of such drugs does not impinge on their capacity to work, or threaten the security of the workplace.

If a worker is coming to work dangerously intoxicated, then she/he makes her/himself and co-workers vulnerable to violent or exploitative clients.

Bringing illegal drugs on or around the premises of the workplace, stealing from co-workers, clients or management threatens the security of the workplace, and is grounds for instant dismissal.

The dismissal of a worker because of alcohol or drug induced behaviour may remove an obvious problem, but it contributes nothing toward:-

- ==> assisting the worker to become rehabilitated;
- ==> overcoming the negative aspects of peer pressure at the workplace in the drug and alcohol cycle;
- ==> developing a workplace culture in which peer pressure could discourage dangerous alcohol and other drug use;
- ==> developing and maintaining an atmosphere in which both alcohol and other drug users and non users feel supported by management.

Furthermore, the dismissal of a worker on the grounds of intoxication is often open to challenge, firstly, on the basis of degree of intoxication; and, secondly, on the emotional principle of "giving a person a fair go".

The focus of this policy is on prevention, support and shared responsibility, which are powerful forces in developing a positive workplace culture.

GOALS

- ==> To create a safe working environment.
- ==> Reduce harm which many follow dangerous use of alcohol or other drugs.
- ==> Aiding workers in getting assistance for alcohol or other drug problems.
- ==> Consultation between operators and workers on policy decisions regarding drugs and alcohol.
- ==> To create a working environment which facilitates workers and operators communicating clearly, ensuring optimum conditions for increased productivity.
- ==> Ensure that names of workers going for treatment is kept confidential
- ==> Involve health practitioners for advice on latest information.

PREVENTION

SO THAT:

- ==> All workers are safe.
- ==> Workers keep their jobs.
- ==> Workers cannot be unduly blamed for accidents whether they are injured or not.
- ==> Workers are not pushed into dangerous use of alcohol or other drugs.
- ==> More accurate and updated information is available about the safe and unsafe use of alcohol and other drugs and the consequences of drug use.
- ==> The sex industry workplace maintains a healthy and positive atmosphere.
- ==> Productivity is maintained at optimum levels.

POLICY:

WORKERS DANGEROUSLY AFFECTED BY ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

- ==> A worker who is having problems with alcohol and/or other drugs, but who is willing to get help, will not be sacked because of that problem.
- ==> A worker who is dangerously affected by alcohol and/or any other drug will not be allowed to work until she/he has an acceptable level of sobriety, ie. deemed fit to do the job.
- ==> If a worker who dangerously affected by alcohol and/or any other drug is sent home more than three times, the worker will attend a meeting between her/himself, the operator or receptionist from the workplace and a person nominated by the worker to be a support person for the worker. If the worker then agrees to get help, she/he will be given one chance to prove her/himself. If the worker is found to be dangerously intoxicated after this warning, she/he may be dismissed.
- ==> A worker who is having problems with alcohol and/or other drugs must stick with a program to keep up the protection from being sacked.

==> If a worker refuses, she/he may be dismissed the next time she/he is dangerously affected.

THE ROLE OF THE EMPLOYER/OPERATOR

Any employer/operator who agrees to implement this policy will provide the following:

==> The employer/operator is expected to support the policy and its warning procedures, as well as adopting job protection for the worker who co-operates with the program.

"Job Protection" means that a co-operating worker will not be dismissed for reasons of drug use problems.

A "co-operating worker" is one who recognises her/his alcohol or drug intoxication, agrees to cease work when advised by the receptionist and seek professional help.

==> Should the receptionist or operator be compelled to intervene with an intoxicated worker, the terms "addict", "junkie", or "alcoholic", are inconsistent with the aims of the policy and should not be used. Further, the following approach is recommended:-

- * Avoid using judgemental terms like "You're too stoned / drunk to work".
- * Confrontation should be avoided.
- * Be brief, firm and calm, and do not be provoked into a debate with the affected worker.
- * Continue to focus on the safety factor and risks to the worker and her/his co-workers.
- * Make suitable arrangements to ensure the worker gets home safely.

==> Sharps disposal bins should be placed in all brothels, preferably in the toilets or staff room, with no penalties for using them. This is required by the Occupational Health and Safety Code of Practice for the Sex Industry in the ACT.

==> Educational material to be provided by operators on harm reduction, safe use of alcohol and other drugs, to be available in the staff room.

CONCLUSION

Endorsement and support for this policy will result in the following benefits:

- ==> A more productive workforce;
- ==> an atmosphere of mutual support between management and workers;
- ==> improved health and interpersonal relations for those rehabilitated;
- ==> an environment which discourages alcohol and drug abuse; and
- ==> a message of warning to those who wish to promote the use of alcohol or other avoidable drugs.