



ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE

A guide to workplace
alcohol policy for
senior management



IARD
INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR
RESPONSIBLE DRINKING



About this guide

- ▶ This guide is intended to inspire organizations that do not already have a Workplace Alcohol Policy to develop one. It also encourages organizations to incorporate alcohol awareness as part of a wider employee wellbeing strategy by:
 - ▷ Helping to inform policies in the workplace
 - ▷ Empowering employees to make informed decisions about their drinking
 - ▷ Supporting the decisions of those who choose not to drink alcohol
 - ▷ Giving line managers tools to recognize signs of alcohol misuse and manage situations sensitively and effectively
- ▶ This guide has been developed by the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD), and forms part of their resources that help organizations embed responsible practices within their businesses; other resources cover the *Responsible Retailing of Beverage Alcohol*, the *Responsible Service of Beverage Alcohol*, and *Delivering Alcohol in the Right Way* (all accessed via <https://www.edapp.com/iard/signup>).
- ▶ The contents of this resource are not intended as legal or health advice. Anyone who has questions about their drinking should consult their healthcare professional.
- ▶ This resource is also intended to supplement, but not replace, your workplace's existing policies. Always ensure that you are complying with any applicable legal regulations, and consult health, Human Resources (HR), and legal professionals in your jurisdiction for further advice.

About IARD

The International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to addressing harmful drinking worldwide and promoting understanding of responsible drinking, among those who choose to drink. IARD is supported by its member companies from all sectors of the regulated alcohol industry – beer, wine, and spirits – in their common purpose of being part of the solution in reducing the harmful use of alcohol.

IARD's member and associate member companies are commercially active in more than 100 countries. They contribute to sustainable growth and embrace a whole-of-society approach to reducing harmful drinking. They are determined to make a real difference and acknowledge that the development and implementation of programs will be more effective as part of a multi-stakeholder approach.



IARD associate members



Workplace alcohol misuse

In this guide, the term alcohol misuse refers to drinking in a way that could adversely affect any or all of the following: an employee's health and wellbeing; work performance, conduct, or both; or their safety or others' safety in the workplace.



What are Workplace Alcohol Policies (WAPs)?

Many workplaces have an alcohol policy; WAPs usually:

- ▶ Provide a framework for managing alcohol-related issues
- ▶ Work in conjunction with health and safety, HR, and other relevant policies
- ▶ Are developed with relevant stakeholders, for example, trade unions, board of directors, other employee representatives

Workplace Alcohol Policies usually contain:

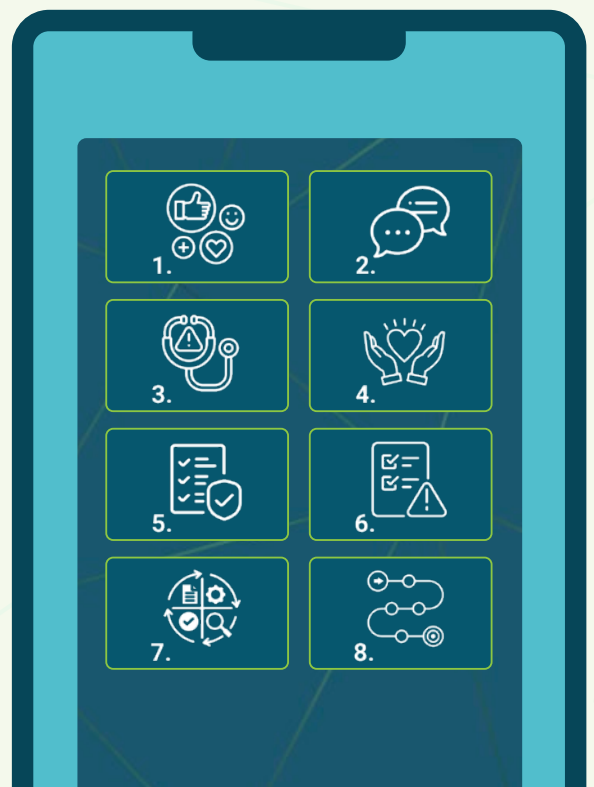
- ▶ Guidance on alcohol consumption and behavior at work, designed to promote a safe working environment that is free from the effects of harmful drinking
- ▶ Guidance around provision and consumption of alcohol at work social events
- ▶ Processes so that staff who feel concerned about their or another colleague's drinking can confidentially express concern to an appropriate person
- ▶ Mechanisms for raising harmful drinking behaviors with employees to highlight negative effects on performance, health, and safety
- ▶ Expectations of employees, such as reporting any alcohol-related offences to your line manager
 - ▷ Some companies set out that they do not penalize employees who self-report issues that affect their work, such as alcohol misuse, but will discipline employees who do not self-report these issues
- ▶ Any penalties for not complying with the WAP
- ▶ Information on national drinking guidelines (where applicable)
- ▶ Provision of confidential support and help for employees with alcohol use disorders or harmful drinking behaviors
- ▶ Contact details of specialist support services
- ▶ Policy on any mandatory alcohol testing

Why are these policies important?:

Workplace Alcohol Policies can help address employee performance and safety issues caused by alcohol misuse, and can be valuable additions to HR and health and safety policies. They can also:

- ▶ Positively impact all those affected, and send a message that the company is a caring employer
- ▶ Demonstrate that the company deals with poor performance and dangerous actions of colleagues for the benefit of all employees
- ▶ Help ensure that employers meet health, safety, and duty of care obligations to their employees

Although legislation and specific obligations vary across the globe, [the World Health Organization \(2010\) says that](#) "Workers' health, safety and well-being are vital concerns to hundreds of millions of working people worldwide. But the issue extends even further beyond individuals and their families. It is of paramount importance to the productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises, communities, and to national and regional economies."



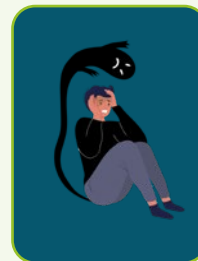
✓ Examples of specific policies and other recommendations

Every workplace has different requirements and, accordingly, needs to create custom policies for alcohol in the workplace. The following is not an exhaustive list, rather a selection of potential policies:

- ▶ “Staff whose work involves driving, operating plant or machinery, or working with power tools must NOT consume alcohol before coming on duty or during duty, including at meal or break times.”
- ▶ “No-alcohol options should always be available at work events.”
- ▶ “No-one should be expected to drink alcohol at work events, or questioned or judged if they are not drinking.”
- ▶ “Under no circumstances shall an employee be intoxicated on company premises, or while conducting business.”

There is other general content that could be included in a WAP and customized as appropriate for the individual workplace. For example:

- ▶ Many companies ensure that their social or celebratory activities are not centered on alcohol, choosing instead to go for a meal or on an activity day, for example.
- ▶ Many companies provide wellbeing packages to their employees.
 - ▷ This might include access to advice, counselling, and support with health issues, and directions to screening services such as the [Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test \(AUDIT\)](#).
 - The AUDIT was originally developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a simple screening tool for clinicians to assess their patients’ alcohol consumption. It has been adapted for use in different settings, including self-screening, and can help an individual identify if their drinking patterns are low risk or potentially hazardous or harmful .
- ▶ Many companies create confidential pathways for employees to report issues and seek help if they have concerns about their drinking.



✓ Every company has different requirements

Here are some questions to consider when developing your company’s WAP. For “YES” answers, customize and include a policy within your WAP according to your company’s needs. This is not an exhaustive list of situations; every workplace has different requirements.

- ▶ Do you have employees who routinely attend dinner events or work drinks?
 - ▷ For example, sales staff entertaining clients
- ▶ Are your employees frequently in contact with alcohol as part of their job?
 - ▷ For example, bar staff
- ▶ Do you have employees who operate heavy machinery or drive as part of their job?
 - ▷ For example, delivery drivers
- ▶ Do you hold social events for staff?
- ▶ Do you hold events that specifically feature alcohol?
 - ▷ For example, product tastings
- ▶ Who needs to be covered by your WAP?
 - ▷ For example, just employees, or does it also need to cover contractors or perhaps all visitors on site?



Effectively implementing a Workplace Alcohol Policy (WAP)

Workplace Alcohol Policies are most effective when everyone is familiar with them. Ways to promote the WAP could include:

- ▶ The CEO sending a message to all staff about the policy
- ▶ Incorporating WAP awareness sessions into existing workplace events, such as HR lunchtime seminars
- ▶ Giving all employees a hard copy of the policy
- ▶ Displaying the policy on notice boards
- ▶ Making the policy available on the staff intranet
- ▶ Making supporting resources, such as checklists and training videos, available for staff
- ▶ Implementing annual training for managers and staff (see box below)

All communications about the WAP should emphasize that any conversations around potential alcohol misuse will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

IARD's online, interactive resource for line managers is available via <https://www.edapp.com/iard/signup>

- ▶ The course contents include the importance of fostering a responsible workplace environment, and how to sensitively and professionally discuss concerns around alcohol misuse with an employee.
- ▶ The resource is intended to complement, rather than replace, your workplace's existing policies.

