



# ULTIMATE GUIDE TO **WORKPLACE DRUG TESTING**

# Why This Guide?

Because you downloaded this guide, you likely already know that every workplace is affected by substance use disorders to some degree (either directly or indirectly).

The statistics are startling:

1.

**Nearly 21 million Americans** currently suffer from a substance use disorder involving alcohol or drugs, and one in 7 people in the U.S. is expected to develop a substance use disorder at some point in their lives. (Source: [U.S. Surgeon General](#))

2.

People with substance use disorders **miss nearly 50% more work than their peers**. This can equal up to six weeks annually. And, of course, absenteeism leads to decreased productivity. (Source: [National Safety Council](#))

3.

On-the-job alcohol abuse can have devastating effects. Analyses of workplace fatalities showed that at least **11% of the victims had been drinking**. (Source: [NCADD](#))

4.

**"One-fifth of workers and managers** across a wide range of industries and company sizes report that a coworker's on- or off-the-job drinking jeopardized their own productivity and safety." (Source: [NCADD](#))

5.

"The annual cost of untreated substance use disorder **ranges from \$2,600 per employee** in agriculture **to more than \$13,000 per employee** in information and communications." (Source: [National Safety Council](#))

6.

Substance abuse disorders **cost the U.S. economy \$400 billion dollars** each year in crime, health, and lost productivity. (Source: [U.S. Surgeon General](#))

# The good news?

Conducting pre-employment drug testing and creating a workplace alcohol and drug program can help—a lot. As [The Chicago Tribune reports](#), “It’s in an employer’s interest to be proactive. Employees are more likely to undergo treatment if it is initiated by an employer, and those in recovery become better workers . . . Each employee who recovers from a substance abuse disorder saves a company more than \$3,200 a year.”

In addition, the [National Safety Council says](#), “Workers in recovery have lower turnover rates and are less likely to miss work days, less likely to be hospitalized and have fewer doctor visits.” As such, the National Safety Council recommends that companies “enact strong company drug policies.”

Sounds great, but where should you begin? How do you create and launch a program? What is a “strong” drug policy anyway? What else should you and your team know about the complexities of drug testing? We created this guide with those questions in mind.

Inside, we cover the following topics:

- **Drug testing panels**
- **Specimen types**
- **Instant drug testing vs. lab-based testing**
- **On-site testing vs. off-site testing**
- **The case for random drug testing**
- **Effective drug and alcohol policies**
- **Program best practices**
- **Evaluating vendors**

While not an exhaustive guide (such a guide could easily run for 100 pages), this document should arm you with the most relevant information you and your department should understand when creating and running an effective drug and alcohol testing program.

Let’s get started.

# Drug Testing Panels

From a terminology standpoint, a drug “panel” is simply a collection of drugs—or the family of drugs—that you want to test *for* on any given drug screen.

Standard panels exist, and two of the most common are the standard 5-panel urine drug test and 10-panel urine drug test. But those terms can be misleading in the same way as saying two of the most common pizza orders are two-topping pizzas and three-topping pizzas. You might make assumptions about what those toppings are, but the combinations can vary widely.

For example, the “standard” 5-panel is based on the five categories of drugs tested for in a federal drug- testing program. And the “standard” 10-panel is five more drugs on top of that. But if a customer has a specific problem or concern about a drug that’s not on any one of those panels, they can customize the panel to include that particular drug as well as the cut-off levels (i.e., the point at which a test is called positive or negative).

An important caveat: Customization capabilities vary by vendor, and smaller vendors might not be able to meet certain customization needs.

## Industry requirements can play a role.

Certain industries do have requirements. Once common example: Since federal guidelines apply to the Department of Transportation (DOT), the DOT requires a standard 5-panel.

Certain types of organizations might screen similarly as well. Consider steroids. Athletic organizations would likely screen for steroids, but police and fire departments often screen for steroids as well.

Another example: In the healthcare space, more and more organizations are interested in testing for non-illicit drugs in addition to illicit drugs. Think prescription medications that people have access to and that they might be stealing and/or abusing.

## Use different panels for different job types.

There shouldn’t be a discriminatory element to your decision, i.e., ‘I’m choosing this panel for this person, but this other panel for the same person doing the same job.’ You want to have some sort of delineation where this category of job is tested under Panel A and this other category of job is tested under Panel B. And it can be specific to what they do.

Here’s an example that illustrates this point: Let’s say you have employees who paint bridges, which means they’re often hanging off the underside as they paint the bottom. You might want

a more comprehensive drug test panel to make sure they're not potentially at risk of serious injury. But for your executives, maybe it's less concerning and you only want to get a cursory screen to make sure they're not using certain drugs, like heroin.

## Understand the significance of state law.

If it's not a federally regulated industry, like transportation, then drug testing that's done for an employer under their own policy is governed by the state statutory law or the state case law for the state where the work takes place.

## Let's unpack that a bit.

Each state typically falls into one of three categories:

- ***They have no state statute around drug testing.*** They haven't passed a state statute telling you what you can or can't do as it relates to drug testing. There's no rule other than case law, which only represents legal authority as it pertains to the facts of the case. No restrictions have been codified.
- ***They have mandatory state laws around drug testing.*** These laws, which vary in each state, will provide specific guidelines that organizations must follow, such as what types of tests you can perform and what methods you can use (e.g., urine, hair, oral fluids).
- ***Some states have voluntary states laws around drug testing.*** Voluntary state statutes related to drug testing essentially serve as incentives—the company can choose to voluntarily adhere to the law, and usually there's a benefit for them if they do so (typically a worker's compensation premium discount).

So every state has its own unique specifics, which is why it's important to work with a reputable drug-screening vendor that understands and complies with all the various laws. Plus, laws often change. A current hot button issue is how to handle medicinal and recreational marijuana. Every state has different language and different standards about what happens in those situations.

## Audit your drug-testing panel.

The drugs people use change as well, so you should regularly review your panel to make sure it's achieving what you want to accomplish.

Sometimes an HR department decides on what their drug-testing panel is and then it stays the same for 15 years just because nobody wants to go back and think about it again. But the drugs people are using today are different from the drugs they were using 15 years ago. So, if your concern is making sure that you have a drug-free workplace, then you have to make sure your drug panels keep pace with the times.

# Specimens: Urine, Oral Fluid, Hair

Let's talk about the specimen collected during a drug test: urine, oral fluid, or hair. While urine is typically the most common specimen that employers test, oral fluid (saliva) and hair have been gaining traction in recent years.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you decide what's best for your drug-screening program.

## Consider look-back periods.

With urine, the look-back period is typically within that same week. In some cases—for example, if the person is a chronic marijuana user—the look-back period with a urine test might go back as far as two or three weeks.

In the case of hair testing, the look-back period is 90 days (and in some cases, even longer). The hair test won't indicate immediate drug use, however, but rather a pattern of recurring drug use.

Let's use the following hypothetical to demonstrate the difference. If a person has been drug-free all their life, but used an opioid today and got a hair drug test tomorrow, the result would be negative (but a urinalysis would be positive). On the other hand, if a person took an opioid for a couple of weeks two months ago, but hasn't done anything since and got a hair drug test tomorrow, the result would be positive, but the urine drug test would be negative.

Why does this matter? Well, many companies do a drug test at the point of hire. If a urine test only looks back a week, then the job applicant (who is likely anticipating the test) can usually get through that hurdle by abstaining from drugs for seven days. But if you conduct hair testing, it's much harder to be clean for three months if you're a regular drug user.

Oral fluid, by contrast, has a similar look-back window to urine, but it also provides even more immediacy than urine. Oral fluid testing can detect certain drugs in as little as 30-60 minutes after ingestion.

## Some additional scenarios to consider:

- If you conduct random drug testing post-hire, urine might be a good option since the person can't "plan" in the same way they can for a new job. Hair testing might also make sense from a drug-policy enforcement perspective.
- Testing hair has become popular with companies that are pursuing so-called "lifestyle testing" to determine if the person's lifestyle includes drug use. The look-back period of 90 days provides better insights than the look-back period for urine or oral fluid.

- Hair is not a good specimen, however, for incident-based drug testing like a post-accident test or a reasonable suspicion test. If you're dealing with a person whom you think is high and impaired on the job, testing the person's hair won't work because it takes at least several days for the hair to grow out to the point where the drug could be detected. In this case, urine or oral fluid is a better specimen to test.

## **Consider ease of collection and the cheating factor.**

If your organization opts for urine or hair testing, a trained collector must administer the test. In an oral fluid situation, a trained collector isn't required.

A company can conduct an oral fluid test on site by someone designated within the company, such as an HR manager, nurse, or occupational health professional. The person can administer the test (a simple cotton swab that the person puts inside his or her cheek for 10 seconds), package it up, and send it to the laboratory.

If the company doesn't want anyone within the company to conduct the oral fluid test, the applicant/employee can go to a collection site to have the test administered or the company could hire a third-party collector to come on site. Regardless of where or who conducts the test, this method is known as a Directly Observed Test. The person conducting the test hands the applicant/employee the test swab and directly observes the applicant/employee doing the test.

Why does this matter? Studies suggest the positivity rate is three times higher with oral fluid tests because there's no way to cheat them. With a urine test, the collector hands the person a cup and the person goes behind a closed door; he or she is in there alone with the cup. While various protocols and security measures are in place to prevent cheating, people are very creative and find ways to do it anyway.

In the oral fluid case, there's no way to cheat because it's literally face-to-face: the person conducting the test hands the applicant/employee a swab. The applicant/employee puts it inside his or her cheek. Then, the test is over. So oral fluid testing is appealing because it doesn't require a trained collector and because it's impossible to cheat. (You can't cheat with hair, either, but hair requires a trained collector.)

*"Studies suggest the positivity rate is three times higher with oral fluid tests because there's no way to cheat them."*

Oral fluid testing could have significant ramifications, depending on your workforce. For example, if you have employees who use heavy machinery, you might want to consider randomly testing oral fluids as opposed to urine (since there's no way to cheat). This way, you have a better chance of weeding out drug users and, thus, avoiding accidents on the job due to impairment. Hair would

also give you relevant insights regarding a pattern of drug use, but, again, hair testing requires a trained collector, which leads to our next section.

## A couple additional points about collection sites...

You want to make getting a drug test as easy as possible for your applicants and existing employees, so you should choose a drug-testing vendor that has a large network of collection sites. (To understand what we mean by “large,” [Good Egg has over 10,000 collection sites nationwide.](#))

It’s worth noting that hair tests, in terms of the collection sites that do them, are more limited than urine. So if you’re leaning towards hair specimens, make sure it’s a viable option based on your company’s location. Hair testing sites are more readily available in populated areas, but if your company is located in a rural area, it might be more difficult to find a trained hair collector.

On the oral fluid front, the big question you need to ask is whether you want to send people off campus to a collection site or you want to conduct the tests on site (with someone from within your company or a third-party collector who comes to your site).

# Instant Drug Testing vs. Lab-Based Testing

An instant drug test is exactly as its name implies—you get the results right away, at the point where it’s collected, usually within a few minutes. It’s what we call an immunoassay screening; its purpose is to detect any presence of that category of drugs in the specimen. The result is either negative (it’s not present) or non-negative (it is present). An instant drug test can’t officially give a “positive” result.

Other names for instant testing are “point of care testing” (POTC) and rapid tests. An instant drug test typically uses urine or oral fluid (saliva) for the test specimen. The test usually screens for some combination of the following: amphetamine, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine, marijuana, methadone, methamphetamine, opiates, oxycodone, PCP, and propoxyphene.

For a lab-based test, the collected specimen (urine, hair, oral fluid) is sent to a laboratory for more rigorous testing. As such, it takes longer to get the results (2-3 days, on average).

A lab-based test can screen for any drug. Before testing, your organization would have already determined what you want the drug panel to be. So if you needed a custom panel that includes a different drug—say Fentanyl, for example—you’d have already arranged for/indicated that.



## What about accuracy?

Lab-based drug tests are more accurate. We like to say they are more rigorous, more involved, and more defensible in a court of law, all of which are elements certain organizations must consider, particularly heavily regulated industries, like the DOT.

When we say lab-based testing is “more involved,” here’s what we mean: The lab will conduct an initial screening to determine if the specimen is clean of any drugs or if it has some type of drug metabolite in it. If the answer is yes to the drug metabolite, then the lab runs it through a more advanced process to confirm what the drug is—it will specifically identify the chemical makeup and the quantity.

There are cut-offs and thresholds for ensuring that things like passive secondhand inhalation of marijuana doesn’t get misconstrued as use, for example. Or most people are probably familiar with the infamous “poppy seed situation” that comes up in drug testing: an instant drug test might pick up the presence of morphine (which is an opiate) if you consume poppy seeds. But a lab will have cut-offs. So in order to be deemed positive, the result has to be above a certain quantitative threshold where you can justifiably prove in court that it’s not secondhand inhalation or it’s not inadvertent exposure, but it’s actually direct use of some type of chemical.

*“Lab-based drug tests are more accurate.”*

Another layer of rigor comes with the Medical Review Officer (MRO). [The DOT defines an MRO](#) “as a person who is a licensed physician and who is responsible for receiving and reviewing laboratory results generated by an employer’s drug testing program and evaluating medical explanations for certain drug test results.”

Certain industries, like the DOT, require an MRO to review lab results. But even if an employer isn’t legally required to use an MRO, it can still choose to enlist an MRO’s services for its employee drug-testing program. Again, this helps ensure the integrity of the results and the program itself. It’s a smart thing to consider implementing for any job that has a safety sensitive element to it (for example, anyone operating machinery).

Rapid testing doesn’t have all these protocols. Its main purpose is speed and to simply report either a “negative” or “non-negative” result.

## Understand the law.

Certain federally regulated organizations can only conduct lab-based drug testing. For organizations that don’t fall under federal regulations, state law will play a role. For example, some states don’t allow instant testing. Others will allow the use of instant testing, but if the test comes back as non-negative, you need to send the test to the lab for confirmation.

Bottom line: When it comes to drug testing, every state has its own unique take.

## How to decide between instant drug testing vs. lab-based drug testing.

If a company has safety sensitive jobs or needs rigor and the ability to defend itself in a court-type setting, then lab testing is the way to go. But if speed is more important than so-called “accuracy,” instant testing probably makes more sense. A staffing agency, for example, is a big user of instant testing, since the goal is to get a quick read and move applicants along quickly.

You need to keep costs in mind as well. Instant testing can be cheaper. If you’re sending people to a collection site for the instant test, it’s comparable to lab-based testing. But if you’re doing instant drug testing on site without a collector, it could be less expensive.

One final important point: it doesn’t necessarily need to be an either-or decision. You might end up using a combination of instant testing and lab-based testing.

## On-Site vs. Off-Site Testing

The labels themselves indicate the obvious difference between on-site and off-site drug testing. But let’s dig a little deeper.

For off-site drug testing, your job applicants and/or employees need to travel to a collection site. This can be significant, since one of the biggest challenges with pre-employment drug testing is getting people to take their tests. Human beings are procrastinators by nature, so even if a person has nothing to hide, sometimes simply getting the person to show up for the drug test can be difficult.

On-site drug testing happens at the physical job site. This testing consists of two types:

1. On-site collections that the company administers because it has staff members trained\* as collectors.
2. On-site collections conducted by a third-party collector who goes to the location and administers the tests. In this case, the collector might have a mobile operation (such as a van) or he or she may use the company’s restroom facility or another room for testing days.

\* *Note:* Oral fluid testing does not require professionally trained collectors who do this function for a living. The process with oral fluid is so simple, you don’t need a professional or certification—you can watch a quick video and handle it yourself.

## Weigh the costs vs. convenience.

The convenience factor can be huge, especially given people's penchant for procrastination. Not to mention conducting collections on site will help speed up the overall process since you don't have to factor in the human delay of "I'll get around to it someday."

Having a collector come on site costs more, but the convenience factor and reduction in time-to-hire can potentially offset those costs. For example, if you're doing pre-employment drug testing and you know you have a recruiting event every two weeks, then the collector would be there every two weeks during the event. The collector's regular presence would help streamline the hiring process and, as such, that would likely offset the additional costs.

## Working with a national provider can make a difference.

You should work with a reputable national vendor that has a wide network of collection sites because this will make testing more convenient for applicants and employees. Plus, you won't have to juggle multiple drug-testing vendors, which will help make the overall process more efficient as well.

A good vendor will also recommend custom solutions rather than a one-size-fits-all option. Custom solutions will allow you to create a drug-testing protocol that makes sense for each location. For example, your administrative offices might have a different protocol from the manufacturing plant with heavy machinery. The former might do off-site testing pre-hire, and the latter might have random drug testing on site given the nature of the job. (A good vendor can also create a streamlined solution that includes pre-hire background checks and ongoing monitoring, should you want those elements as well.)

*"A good vendor can also create a streamlined solution that includes pre-hire background checks and ongoing monitoring."*

Or maybe the people in your offices in New York and Chicago go to area collection sites, but for your plant in rural Montana, a trained collector comes out every month. You get the idea. A good vendor with a strong network can walk you through options and put together a solution that meets your needs and achieves your goals.

Interested in using Good Egg as your drug screening provider?

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# The Case for Random Drug Testing

If you conduct pre-employment drug tests, you might think that's enough, but the problem with pre-hire drug screenings is they capture only one point in time.

If the applicant passes the drug test, how can you ensure this person remains clean three weeks, three months, or three years from now while working for you? After all, you want your employees to be drug-free as well, not just the applicants you're considering, right?

This is where random drug testing comes in.

## **Random drug testing is necessary if your company endeavors to have a drug-free workplace.**

Sure, any company can say it supports/desires/wants a drug-free workplace, but unless you're monitoring employees via random drug testing, you'll never have any sense if your company is achieving this goal. You need to put your money where your mouth is, especially considering that [70% of the 14.8 million Americans who abuse drugs are employed](#).

## **Random drug testing can help deter drug abuse.**

When it comes to pre-hire drug tests, applicants know the test is coming and can "plan" accordingly (or choose to drop out of contention). But the randomness of random drug testing means employees can't predict when their name will come up, so they can't "prepare" by abstaining.

As a result, some employees will decide the risk (i.e., potentially losing their job) isn't worth it and won't use illicit drugs. Note: we understand that the threat of random drug testing won't necessarily deter people dealing with addiction. But it could very well deter casual users, which would support the pursuit of a drug-free environment.

## **Random drug testing, when instituted properly, helps boost productivity and morale.**

We've heard arguments that random drug testing lowers morale because of the so-called Big Brother effect. But we believe random drug testing—when part of a transparent alcohol and drug program that follows best practices—has a good chance of boosting morale (among other things).

Consider the following stats:

- According to a [2017 survey by the National Safety Council](#), prescription drug misuse impacts more than 70% of U.S. workplaces.

- The National Safety Council [also notes](#) that people with substance use disorders miss nearly 50% more work than their peers.
- The [United States Surgeon General reports](#) that substance abuse disorders cost the U.S. economy \$400 billion dollars each year in crime, health, and lost productivity.

So if an organization can reduce drug use among its employees thanks to a clear, transparent policy that includes random testing, it stands to reason that the organization will likely experience a boost in things like productivity and morale—not the opposite.

*"In addition to promoting a safer, more productive workplace, it can help to decrease employee turnover and absenteeism, reduce employer risk, and lower workers' compensation incidence rates."*

*– [Occupational Health & Safety](#)*

## **Random drug testing could result in savings—and big wins.**

Certain states offer discounts on workers' compensation premiums if the company conducts random drug testing. And if your organization is in the business of trying to land contracts with larger companies or government agencies, the fact your organization has instituted a drug-free workforce could give you a leg up, since more and more companies and government agencies will only choose suppliers and vendors who conduct random drug testing.

## **Getting started: important items to consider.**

If you want to implement random drug testing, don't rush into it. You need to develop a clear, comprehensive, and compliant alcohol and drug policy, and this takes time and, ideally, outside expertise. You'll need guidance regarding your state's laws (or states' laws, if you operate in multiple states). You'll need to create a company policy that is robust and thorough enough that it covers all potential situations.

From there, you'll need to roll it out to your workforce in such a way that everyone knows what to expect. Remember, while "catching" employees abusing drugs has some benefit, the biggest success will come from a program that's well known among the entire employee base. If your program is an afterthought and most employees forget it even exists, then it won't achieve the deterrent effect that you want. The program needs to remain top of mind.

# Creating an Effective Alcohol & Drug Policy

If you're launching an alcohol and drug testing program, it's imperative that you have a clear and comprehensive written policy. Here are six tips to guide you in its creation.

## **Discuss the company's objectives.**

Discussing the objectives with your team will better prepare you for when you sit down to draft the written policy. Don't develop the objectives in a vacuum, either. You must have buy-in and support from the C-suite and/or upper management, so discuss the objectives with them as well.

Remember, the easier it is for you to articulate the objectives, the easier it will be to translate them to the written word. Strive to draft a policy that's clear, comprehensive, and compliant, which leads us to our next point.

## **Get outside expertise.**

For the majority of companies, the only way to truly create a compliant alcohol and drug testing program is by working with an outside vendor. This vendor should have legal expertise as well as experience in setting up successful programs.

If you choose to work with only an attorney, you might have the legal aspects covered, but not the minutia that goes into setting up a program or rolling out the policy to employees. Likewise, if you work with a smaller, local screening company, they probably won't have the legal expertise needed to ensure your policy and program remain compliant.

## **Make the policy accessible to everyone.**

This is two-fold. First, make the policy physically accessible. People should have easy access to it via the company intranet and/or breakrooms, for example.

Second, make it accessible from a comprehension standpoint. Avoid legalese. Draft it in a way that's easy to understand (and make it available in various languages, as needed, depending on your employee population).

## **Clearly state what's prohibited conduct and make it company-specific.**

Boilerplate language exists, but you want a policy that's relevant to your organization. For example, let's say your company occupies two floors of an office building—the first and second floors. But

the first floor also shares space with a bar and brewery. So your policy will need to address what people can and can't do when it comes to "happy hour" at the bar.

## **Further points to consider:**

- Depending on the size of the organization, you can get as granular or as high level as you want. But it's critical that your policy deals with real situations that your employees will likely encounter.
- Make sure the policy is precise regarding coverage. This is especially important if you have a company that's operating in multiple states with multiple job categories or different job roles.
- Be wary of so-called "across the board" policies. Your policy must be equitable for all employees across the board, yes. But in order to achieve this, your policy's details/specifics might differ depending on certain factors, such as job types and/or what states employees are working in.
- Remember, compliance is incredibly complicated. For example, accepted specimen types (urine, oral fluid, hair) can differ, depending on the state. Acceptable consequences for positive tests can differ as well: some states more closely dictate whether you need to give a person a second chance. Not to mention you need a solid plan for dealing with the abuse of legal drugs, such as prescription medications.

## **Don't underestimate the effectiveness of a robust FAQ section.**

Anticipate and answer as many questions as possible. Consider all the different scenarios that could come up during the drug testing process and determine what your company's concrete policy decision will be for each scenario.

For example, what will the consequence be if the result of a random drug test is positive? In many companies, that might mean the employee loses their job. Some companies, however, might have a second chance policy where they'll send the employee for some type of rehab and the person gets a chance to return to work if they can prove they're clean again.

But the details of how that happens—who pays for the treatment, where treatment takes place—all of that should be spelled out in the policy so you're not figuring it out on the fly (and possibly making mistakes as a result).

## **Revisit the policy annually (at least).**

Circumstances change. Not just laws, but even situations within your company (e.g., maybe your company acquires another entity and suddenly you have a manufacturing plant where people operate heavy machinery). Treat your alcohol and drug policy like the living, breathing document that it is and make sure you review and update it yearly (at the very least).

# Program Best Practices

The goal is to launch an effective alcohol and drug testing program. Follow these best practices and you'll be well on your way.

## **Provide employees with a clear and comprehensive written policy.**

We talked about this in the previous section, but it's so important, it's worth recapping here. The written policy is essentially your program's constitution—it outlines everything, including prohibited conduct and consequences the company will impose on employees who violate the policy. It should be clear, concise, and accessible by all members of your organization.

Your policy should also conform to the state law in each of the locations in which your organization operates. In addition to ensuring compliance, this will also help your organization take advantage of workers' compensation rate discounts. Always be consistent when applying the policy. Inconsistencies and exceptions will get your organization into trouble—trouble that could result in costly fines, brand damage, and poor workplace morale.

## **Regularly revisit the policy and update it as needed.**

You should revisit the policy annually at the very least. Why? Situations change, from state laws to situations within the organization itself. Ten years ago, no state allowed the recreational use of marijuana. Today, laws around marijuana are incredibly complex, with some states allowing medical use, others allowing recreational use, and still others "decriminalizing" weed.

## **Designate a program manager.**

Employees will have questions, no matter how well written your alcohol and drug policy is. The program manager serves as a conduit between the employees and the program itself. As for whom you should identify as the program manager, this will vary depending on the organization and/or the industry. Someone from HR is often tasked with this position. If the organization is large enough, there might be two program managers—someone who manages the pre-employment drug-testing program and someone who manages the program for current employees.

## **Don't underestimate compliance.**

It's impossible for one person or even one department, like HR, to keep up with all the complexities that compliance creates. And non-compliance could result in costly litigation and brand damage. Don't chance it. Work with a third party that can guide you, which brings us to our next point.



## Choose reputable partners.

Vendor selection is important, whether you're opting to work with a national third-party administrator or if you're simply selecting local collection sites and laboratories.

Make sure you adequately vet the company you're working with and that it's qualified and capable to handle your business. That's important. They should have a good understanding of the law and what you're trying to achieve.

## Communicate, communicate, and communicate some more.

In our experience, companies that run excellent programs all have this in common: they communicate really well with their people. They make sure employees know about the program, and not simply during the initial rollout. They make sure the program remains top of mind by including updates in places where employees congregate (intranets, breakrooms) and through written communications, like company newsletters. They make sure employees have access to resources to get more info if they have questions. And they don't approach communication from an adversarial mindset ("if you do drugs, you'll lose your job!"). Rather, they share how everyone benefits from a drug-free workplace.

## Provide help to those in need.

We know it can be challenging to find and hire great people. And sometimes, great people make mistakes. For those who test positive, offer help through a substance abuse professional and/or program to get your valuable employee back to work.

This approach won't simply make you feel good—it works, too. We noted this earlier, but it's worth repeating here: [\*The Chicago Tribune reports\*](#). "It's in an employer's interest to be proactive. Employees are more likely to undergo treatment if it is initiated by an employer, and those in recovery become better workers . . . Each employee who recovers from a substance abuse disorder saves a company more than \$3,200 a year."

Want more information on how Good Egg conducts Drug Test Screening & Monitoring?

[Click Here For Info](#)

# Evaluating Vendors

Keep the following in mind when evaluating vendors. You can also download [our comprehensive guide on how to choose a screening vendor](#).

## Scratch the surface (don't be shy).

Just because a company says it can do drug testing, that doesn't necessarily mean it has the expertise and experience to do it right.

Anyone can say they “offer” drug tests, but you should choose a vendor that focuses on drug testing. The vendor's website should make it clear that drug testing is a core part of its business. Ongoing discussions with the sales representative should confirm this as well.

To further evaluate the vendor's expertise, ask probing questions, such as the following:

- What's your approach to compliance?
- Do you help clients create alcohol and drug testing policies?
- How many collection sites do you have access to?

Some screening companies might say they can do drug testing, and they'd be correct in that they can get a test done for you. But the problem with many of these companies is they often lack legal expertise and/or experience in setting up compliant programs. Get these things wrong, and your organization could face costly litigation—and the brand damage that goes along with it.

So, choose a vendor that sees drug testing as more than a simple transaction. The best vendors want to collaborate with you and help you optimize your organization's program.

## Don't underestimate the power of scale.

You might think working with a smaller, local vendor will provide that personal touch. But the problem with smaller vendors is they don't typically have modern systems and efficient workflows that help reduce time-to-hire. And isn't that your ultimate goal? You want to get the drug screenings done accurately, compliantly, and quickly so you can fill empty seats with good people—and keep good people in those seats.

Modern systems with robust automation help make this a reality. You and your applicants/employees shouldn't be dealing with paper. Because of the tight labor market, good applicants (especially Millennials) can and will walk away if the process is difficult and inefficient—or if they don't have easy access to collection sites.

While most large providers will have electronic platforms, the same isn't true for smaller local players or collection sites. And smaller vendors won't have the strong national network of collection sites and labs available, either.

## **Demand great customer service.**

Employee screening, particularly drug testing, is a critical component to maintaining a safe and productive workforce. It's also a complex component with many moving parts. You will have questions and need help. This is where customer service comes into play.

What you don't need: a customer service merry-go-round where you interact with different people every time you call or email (and that's provided they even return your calls or emails in the first place).

What you do need: a dedicated account manager who acts as a true member of your team and who knows your business and its hiring objectives and challenges. This person will be responsive to your emails and calls. This customer service representative will also be proactive—calling you first to check in, provide updates, and offer strategies for making the screening process even more efficient.

Most importantly, your customer service team should be supported by internal expertise (a Medical Review Officer, or MRO) that will help handle and navigate positive results, including when a positive result isn't really a positive (but rather a non-negative).

Finding that "perfect" vendor who offers expertise, excellent customer service, and modern screenings and technology is NOT easy. Don't give up, and never settle. You might think the customer service aspect isn't important and that you can live with the status quo. But you'll be kicking yourself when you need an answer fast, and all you have is an 800 number that dumps you into a general mailbox or bogs you down in directory hell.

Just remember, this adage usually proves true: you get what you pay for.

Get our comprehensive guide on how to choose the right background check vendor.

**Download Guide**

# We hope this guide was helpful.

Remember, drug testing isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. Working with a reputable vendor who takes the time to learn about your business and goals will go a long way in making sure you develop a successful program that meets those goals.

At Good Egg, we have the legal expertise and experience in launching effective drug and alcohol programs across various industries. We'd love to work with you. [Get in touch online](#) or call us directly: 631-557-0100.



## About Good Egg:

Today, everyone has a digital footprint, thanks to social media. As a result, conducting employee background checks has become a lot more complicated. Plus, old screening methods haven't kept up. Enter Good Egg. We combine the human touch with lightning fast technology that not only looks at a person's past, but also their present and future behaviors. This helps HR managers hire more good eggs faster and with confidence, while maintaining 100% compliance. Learn more at [www.goodegg.io](http://www.goodegg.io).

