

Random vs. Reasonable Suspicion Drug And Alcohol Testing In The Workplace

Professionals attending the 2022 Drug and Alcohol Testing Industry Association (DATIA) annual conference held in Louisville, Kentucky received a sneak peek at the 2021 **Quest Diagnostics Drug Testing Index™ (DTI)**. The index encompasses a series of reports that provides data regarding trends in workforce drug use based on positivity rates of de-identified laboratory tests. As a nationwide clinical laboratory, Quest Diagnostics performs these tests for a range of illicit, legal and prescription drugs on behalf of employers.

Positive Drug Tests Trends

The most striking revelation exposed by the DTI was that 2021 represented the highest levels of positive drug tests among U.S. workers since 2001¹. According to Dr. Barry Sample, Senior Science Consultant for Quest Diagnostics, the study uncovered increased drug use among safety-sensitive workers and increased positivity rates in individuals completing post-accident testing. The full report is slated for release in May, 2022.

This trend towards positive drug use impacts all employers, whether unregulated or operating in safety-sensitive industries. Employers can utilize different testing options to support workplace safety, reduce the risk of injury and promote wellness among employees.

This paper will examine how a random or reasonable suspicion testing program can control drug use in the workplace. **Employers should consult competent legal counsel before implementing any drug or alcohol testing programs to ensure compliance with state and federal laws.**

Random Testing

Random testing can detect and deter drug use when used in accordance with a sound workplace testing policy. Random testing involves unannounced drug and/or alcohol testing to ensure employees are not violating company policies regarding the use of illegal substances. Employers who implement random

¹ [Workforce Drug Test Positivity Climbs to Highest Level in Two Decades | Quest Diagnostics \(employersolutions.com\)](https://www.questdiagnostics.com/employersolutions/workforce-drug-test-positivity-climbs-to-highest-level-in-two-decades)

testing typically select a percentage of employees to screen using a random number generator program to ensure no human manipulation is involved in the selection process.

The percentage of employees selected can vary based on whether a company falls under DOT regulations or conducts testing under the authority of their workplace testing Drug and Alcohol policy. While some states restrict randomly testing non-safety-sensitive employees, random testing can serve as a valuable tool to combat drug use in the workplace.

Reasonable Suspicion Testing

Should an employer suspect an employee is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, reasonable suspicion drug and alcohol testing may serve as a beneficial tool. As long as a properly established policy exists, employers may conduct drug and/or alcohol testing on employees who exhibit impairment. An employer would require such testing based on observable indicators. The Department of Transportation (DOT) has specific guidelines and criteria for testing, but unregulated employers may also be subject to certain state-specific restrictions.

Takeaway for Employers

When implemented correctly, random and reasonable suspicion testing options, in conjunction with previously established pre-employment, post-accident, return-to-duty and follow-up testing, will support an employers efforts in achieving a drug-free workplace.

Employers who wish to implement random testing and/or reasonable suspicion testing should ensure such testing policies are clearly documented and made available to all employees.

BIG has decades of experience implementing compliant and effective drug and alcohol testing programs for every type of employer. **If you are interested in learning how a random or reasonable suspicion drug testing program can help your organization, please reach out to your BIG sales executive or account manager.**