

A black and white photograph of a man and a woman in an office setting. The man, on the left, is wearing glasses and a sweater over a collared shirt. The woman, on the right, is wearing a light-colored top and a dark skirt, and is pointing at a whiteboard covered in papers. The background is a blurred office environment.

Cannabis in the workplace: minimizing risk through employee-focused policies, processes and programs

“Legal” is not the same as “acceptable at work.” Morneau Shepell’s solutions help organizations address cannabis-related employee health and safety issues.

Solutions leading to action — and results

Our team of experts at Morneau Shepell has been supporting our clients for years with a full spectrum of services and solutions specifically targeting substance abuse and its effects on employees and the workplace. The legalization of recreational cannabis presents new challenges but requires an identical approach. From policy development through to treatment solutions, Morneau Shepell has the right tools available to mitigate risks while helping to support employees. Regardless of who your EFAP or Disability Case Management provider is, we have solutions for both your organization and your employees.

Substance policy review or development

Given the risks that substance abuse may bring to an organization, it is important that employers have clear substance policies that also cover related issues, such as accommodation, return to work, fitness for duty, and scent-free workplaces. With years of experience in offering workplace support programs, Morneau Shepell is well positioned to help your organization with substance policy development and reviews.

Medical cannabis coverage

The development/review of substance policies related to recreational cannabis provides an opportunity for employers to address the use of medical cannabis. Organizations may consider if including medical cannabis coverage in their benefits plan aligns with their philosophy and HR objectives. A Morneau Shepell consultant can help determine if adding medical cannabis to your plan is the right choice for your organization and, if so, help you understand the options and costs.

Solutions to improve manager capability

- **Workplace Learning Solutions (WLS) training.** Morneau Shepell's workshop, "The legalization of recreational cannabis: Are you ready?" increases awareness of the impacts of cannabis legalization in the workplace and helps people leaders and HR staff prepare for potential questions and challenges. The focus is on health and safety, along with employer and employee rights and obligations. The workshop also addresses the stigma that cannabis users may encounter and highlights the importance of creating a supportive workplace.
- **Manager consultations.** Managers can access an EFAP counsellor 24/7 who will listen and help them manage workplace situations. Together they will explore options, brainstorm solutions and work on action plans. These plans may include strategies for engaging in difficult conversations or recommendations for referring an employee to a monitored counselling program.

Solutions to support employees

- **Workplace Referral Program (WRP).** Morneau Shepell's WRP enables employers to hold employees accountable for getting the help they need. When an employee's known or suspected substance use is impacting the workplace, a WRP referral establishes consent from your employee to share limited information with a workplace contact. Skilled counsellors conduct assessments and deliver direct treatment or make referrals to an intensive program. A clinical manager communicates with your workplace to help inform timely and safe employee return to work (RTW) planning.
- **Substance Abuse Program (SAP).** Our SAP provides employers access to specialist recommendations for employees in a safety-sensitive role who test positive for drugs or alcohol in the workplace. The SAP assessment service and timely reporting determine the best treatment plan to mitigate risks, while helping employees address and treat their substance abuse/addiction problems.
- **Structured Relapse Prevention Program (SRPP).** This program incorporates best practices developed with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
- **Drug testing.** We can coordinate a testing program where policies or specific agreements outline an expectation for unannounced testing. When a safety-sensitive employee returns to work after treatment for a substance use disorder, we can develop a randomized calendar, provide just-in-time outreach to employees of the need to present for testing, and record outcomes.

Morneau Shepell's Workplace Support Programs are specialized mental health and addiction prevention/intervention programs designed to reduce costs for organizations with faster diagnosis, sustainable recovery, and lower incidence of short and long-term disability.

Absence management and accommodation

- **Accommodation Reviews.** We can review accommodation requests for medical validity and develop an appropriate accommodation plan. If support is required through an SAP or SRPP, the case manager will work seamlessly with our Workplace Support Programs team.
- **Absence Management and RTW.** Morneau Shepell case managers perform in-depth assessments, taking multiple perspectives into account to ensure full context around treatment, recovery and RTW plans.

Let us help.

Discover how we can help prepare your organization for cannabis-related employee health and safety issues.

Contact us today

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