

# The County of Hidalgo Drug and Alcohol Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

The County of Hidalgo (the "COUNTY") recognizes that alcohol and drug abuse in the workplace has become a major concern. To help ensure a safe, healthy and productive drug-free work environment for all employees (collectively "Employees") of the COUNTY and others on the property of the COUNTY, to protect COUNTY property and assets, maintain a favorable public image and to assure efficient operations, the COUNTY has adopted a policy on drugs, alcohol and other prohibited items applicable to all Employees. This policy is intended to comply with the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988, the Texas Workers Compensation Act and all applicable regulations issued by the Department of Transportation ("DOT").

It is the policy of the COUNTY to maintain its property and to provide a drug-free working environment that is both safe for Employees and others having business with the COUNTY or on COUNTY property and conducive to efficient and productive work standards. This policy restricts certain items and substances from being brought on or being present in or on COUNTY property, including all COUNTY owned and operated buildings, parking areas, easements and rights of way, vehicles, equipment, parks and recreational areas, capital projects, construction sites, job sites and any areas which fall under the jurisdiction and control of the COUNTY. This policy prohibits Employees from reporting to work, working or being present on COUNTY property, whether or not on duty, from having detectable levels or identifiable trace quantities of certain drugs and other substances. However, this policy is not intended to prohibit or restrict the legal and responsible use of alcohol in County recreation areas by County Employees while off duty.

## 2. Statement of the Drug and Alcohol Policy

The use, possession, sale, manufacture, distribution, transfer, dispensation, concealment, receipt, transportation, or being under the influence of any prohibited items or substances (including the presence of detectable levels or identifiable trace quantities), as defined in Section 3, on COUNTY property or while on COUNTY business, by Employees, is prohibited. Employees must not report for duty or be on COUNTY property while under the influence of, or have in their possession while on COUNTY property, any prohibited item or substance.

## 3. Definitions

Alcohol means the intoxicating agent in beverage alcohol, ethyl alcohol (ethanol) or any other low molecular weight alcohol including methyl and isopropyl alcohol.

CDL means Commercial Driver License holders. The COUNTY requires certain Employees to maintain a CDL. The DOT regulations (49 CFR Parts 40 and 382) require the COUNTY to have a special, mandatory controlled substance and alcohol testing policy for these Employees. All applicable drug and testing procedures shall meet DOT regulations. A copy of the DOT regulations shall be available for inspection and copying in the Personnel Office.

Commission means the Hidalgo County, Texas Civil Service Commission established pursuant to the Texas Local Government Code.

Controlled Substance means illegal drugs plus any other substance covered by Schedules I through V of the Federal Controlled Substances Act (21 USC 801, et seq.) or the Texas Controlled Substances Act (Chap. 481, Texas Health and Safety Code). A controlled substance is unauthorized if the Employee does not have a valid prescription for that substance at the time of its use or possession.

Conviction means a final, non-appealable finding of guilt by either a judge or jury, or a suspension of sentence, probation or deferred adjudication, including a plea of *no lo contendere*.

County means Hidalgo County, Texas, as organized and existing under the constitution and laws of the State of Texas.

Department means a county, district, or precinct office, agency, or board that has jurisdiction and control of designated governmental functions.

Department Head means an individual appointed as a supervisor or a department by one of the following: Commissioner's Court, County Judge, a designated representative of the Commissioner's Court, or an Elected Official.

Detectable means the measurable presence of an illegal or prohibited drug or substance found in body fluids at an mg/ml level of detection specified by the County's contract with a National Institute of Drug Abuse ("NIDA") certified testing laboratory; such levels will meet the DOT requirements.

Elected Official means an individual elected to a position created by the constitution or by statute. The term of an Elected Official is limited by the constitution.

Employee means any person employed by the County, including Elected Officials, full-time, part-time, temporary, probationary and contract employees.

Safety-sensitive Position means a position designated by the County as safety-sensitive as it is one where impairment caused by drug or alcohol use would threaten the health or safety of another Employee or the public.

Under the influence means being unable to perform work in a safe and productive manner, being in a physical or mental condition which creates a risk to the safety and well-being of the individual, other employees, the public or COUNTY property, and/or having a measurable presence of an illegal or prohibited drug or substance found in body fluids at an mg/ml level of detection specified by the County's contract with a NIDA certified lab.

#### **4. Prohibited Items and Prohibited Conduct**

A. The use, possession, sale, manufacture, distribution, dispensation, concealment, receipt, transportation, or being under the influence of any of the following items or substances on COUNTY property (including the presence of detectable levels or identifiable trace quantities), by Employees, is prohibited:

- i. Illegal drugs; controlled substances; marijuana; mood or mind altering substances, legal or illegal; "look-alike" substances; designer, counterfeit or synthetic drugs; inhalants; and any other drugs or substances which will in any way affect safety, workability, alertness, coordination, judgment, response or affect the safety of others on the job.
- ii. Alcoholic beverages. Consuming alcoholic beverages while driving or driving while intoxicated any vehicle for COUNTY business or any COUNTY vehicle at any time is prohibited. The consumption of alcohol on COUNTY time is prohibited.
- iii. Drug paraphernalia.
- iv. Prescription drugs and over the counter medications, except under the following conditions:
  - (a) The drugs have been prescribed by an authorized and Texas licensed medical practitioner for current use (within the past 12 months) for the person in possession of the drugs and filled in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Pharmacy Act, Texas Controlled Substances Act (Chapter 481, Texas Health and Safety Code) and regulations promulgated thereunder.
  - (b) The drugs/medications, both prescribed and over the counter, are limited to a one day's supply, or must be kept in their original container labeled in accordance with the provisions of the applicable laws of the State of Texas and must be taken in accordance with the dosage recommendations and usage cautions and generally must not affect the person's ability to perform work safely.

- (c) The COUNTY may require the Employee to provide documentation from the doctor stating that such use will not impair the Employee's ability to perform the essential functions of his/her position. The COUNTY reserves the right, with Employee's consent, to consult with the Employee's medical doctor to determine if a drug or medication, whether prescribed or not, produces hazardous or non-safe effects and may restrict the use of any such drug or medication accordingly on COUNTY property.

Any Employee taking prescribed or over-the-counter medications will be responsible for consulting the prescribing physician and/or pharmacist to ascertain whether the medication may interfere with safe performance of his/her job. If the use of medication could compromise the safety of the Employee, fellow Employees or the general public, it is the Employee's responsibility to use appropriate personnel procedures (i.e., call in sick, use leave, request change of duty, notify supervisor) to avoid unsafe workplace practices.

The following conduct is prohibited by this policy:

- B. Switching or altering any urine sample submitted for testing.
- C. Refusal to consent to testing. Consent is indicated by signing any form required by the COUNTY or its designated testing facility.
- D. Refusal to submit to an inspection of any desk, locker, vehicle or other COUNTY property under Employee's control when asked to do so by Department Head or Elected Official.
- E. Conviction under any criminal drug statute for a violation occurring in the workplace.
- F. Failure to notify the Department Head, Elected Official or Risk Management of any arrest or conviction under any criminal drug statute, or arrest or conviction of driving while intoxicated, within five (5) days of the arrest or conviction.
- G. Failure to notify Department Head, Elected Official or Risk Management of the side affects of a prescription or non-prescription drug which may impair the Employee's behavior or physical or mental ability to safely and fully perform assigned duties.

- H. Failure to keep prescribed medicine in its original container or to provide proof of identification of drug prescriptions and prescribing physician.
- I. Failure of any COUNTY Employee to report the use or possession of an illegal drug or prohibited item by another COUNTY Employee while on duty or in a COUNTY vehicle.

## 5. Policy Enforcement

Because of the importance of this Policy, the COUNTY reserves the right, at all times, while on COUNTY premises and property and when circumstances warrant, to have the Department Head, Elected Official or personnel designated by COUNTY conduct reasonable searches and inspections of Employees and their personal property and effects, to include, but not limited to lunch boxes, purses, briefcases, baggage, offices, desks, clothing, and vehicles (including trunks, glove compartments, etc.), for the purpose of determining if such Employees or other persons are using, possessing, selling, manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, concealing, receiving or transporting any of the prohibited items and substances.

The Department Head, Elected Official and certain personnel designated by the Department Head have the right to conduct an on-the-spot search and inspection of Employees and their personal property and effects, as described above, if Department Head, Elected Official or designated personnel have a reason to believe that Employees or others, are in violation of this policy. All searches and inspections conducted by outside authorized specialists will be in the presence of the Department Head, Elected Official or such designated personnel.

All Employees are expected to cooperate with any investigation regarding this policy. Failure to cooperate, providing false information or omitting information may subject Employees to disciplinary action in accordance with all COUNTY personnel policies and all applicable state law. A search and inspection may also include and require Employees present on COUNTY property to submit to a drug screen test. Tests may be required under the following circumstances:

- (a) Post-offer pre-employment screening OR post-employment transfer, promotion and/or reassignment to safety-sensitive position;
- (b) When the Department Head, Elected Official or personnel designated by the Department Head have reason to believe that an Employee on COUNTY property is using or under the influence of prohibited drugs, alcohol and substances, or that there has been a violation of this policy;
- (c) When an Employee is found in possession of suspected illegal or prohibited drugs and substances, or when any of these drugs and

substances are found in an area controlled or used exclusively by said Employee or other person;

- (d) When an Employee returns to active employment after a leave of absence of forty-five (45) days or more;
- (e) Following an on-the-job injury requiring treatment from a physician, or, following a serious or potentially serious accident or incident, including near misses, in which safety precautions were violated, unsafe instructions or orders were given, vehicles/equipment/property was damaged, or unusually careless acts were performed. All persons involved and within the immediate vicinity of the incident may have their urine and/or blood tested. If it is impossible or impractical, because of the physical condition of the individual(s) involved in the accident, to give a urine and/or blood sample, and if in subsequent medical treatment of the person(s) blood will be drawn, then blood will be analyzed for drugs, alcohol and other prohibited substances; or
- (f) Random (Periodic and unannounced). Only COUNTY employees who are required to possess a CDL to perform their job duty and/or every employee working in a job classified as a safety-sensitive position will be subject to random testing. Random testing, other than to meet current specific job site requirements, will not commence until thirty (30) days following the date of this policy; however, applicants for employment shall be subject to testing as of the date of this policy. The search, inspection, urine and/or blood drug screening provisions herein will be performed with concern for the personal privacy of each Employee or other person, and will also apply to contract labor, when feasible.

All persons shall have the opportunity, prior to testing and at the testing facility, to list all prescription and non-prescription drugs they have used in the last thirty (30) days and to explain the circumstances surrounding the use of such drugs. All records containing medical information will be maintained in accordance with applicable law.

This testing policy does not include and specifically excludes those Employees covered by the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Department Alcohol and Drug Testing Policy as defined therein.

## **6. Penalties for Violating Policy**

Any Employee found in violation of this policy, or who refuses to submit to a search, or urine and/or blood analysis, shall be removed from COUNTY property and be subject to disciplinary action, in accordance with all COUNTY personnel policies and all applicable state law.

Any Employee who, as a result of drug testing and screening, is found to have detectable levels or identifiable trace quantities of a prohibited drug or substance in his or her system, regardless of when or where the drug or substance entered that person's system, without an explanation satisfactory to the Department Head or Elected Official will be considered in violation of this policy, will be removed from COUNTY property and will be subject to disciplinary action, in accordance with all COUNTY personnel policies and all applicable state law. Additionally, if employment is continued, such Employees may be required to submit to random drug screens and/or to participate in and successfully complete a substance abuse program.

Preliminary findings of a policy violation may require that the Employee be suspended, without pay, pending the results of an investigation. If said investigation clears the Employee of any policy violation, then Employee will be fully reinstated, including pay, to his/her job.

## **7. Notification**

Any Employee who is arrested or convicted of a drug-related offense must report the arrest or conviction to their Department Head, Elected Official or Risk Management within five (5) days of the conviction. Any Employee who is arrested or convicted of driving while intoxicated must report the arrest or conviction to their Department Head, Elected Official or Risk Management within five (5) days of the conviction. Failure to report such an offense may result in disciplinary action in accordance with all COUNTY personnel policies and applicable state law.

## **8. Treatment Programs and Employee Insurance**

While the COUNTY does not sponsor or endorse any specific drug treatment program, such programs are available through public and private health care facilities in the area. Affected employees are encouraged to seek assistance for themselves and their dependents. The group health insurance offered to employees and their dependents may provide limited coverage for expenses related to drug treatment programs. Employees may contact the Human Resources Department or refer to the plan description for details.

The COUNTY does not offer, nor require, participation in drug and alcohol abuse education and training programs. However, various public and private facilities in the area offer such programs and affected or interested employees are encouraged to seek assistance.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read,  
understand and received a copy of the County of Hidalgo Drug and Alcohol Policy, and  
understand I am expected to abide by this Policy.

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Date:

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Signature: