

Mandatory Guidelines for Urine Testing Updated to Include Four Semi-Synthetic Opioids

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New federal mandatory guidelines for workplace drug testing will become effective on October 1, 2017, and will include the authority to test for four semi-synthetic opioids: oxycodone, oxycodone, hydrocodone, and hydromorphone. These are prescription opioid pain medications that have commonly known names such as OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet, Dilaudid, etc.

These four prescription pain medications were added to the standard testing panel because data indicates that although they are prescribed, they are the prescription pain medications that are most frequently used without medical authority. However, under the revised Mandatory Guidelines, positive drug testing results that have a legitimate medical explanation (e.g., supported by a valid prescription), as determined by a Medical Review Officer (MRO), will not be reported to federal agencies.

These revised Mandatory Guidelines for Federal Workplace Drug Testing Programs using Urine (UrMG) affect all federal employees in a testing designated position, which is defined by each agency's Drug-Free Workplace Program. In 1986, the Federal Drug-Free Workplace Program was initiated by Executive Order 12564 to establish the goal of a drug-free federal workplace. The Program made it a condition of employment for all federal employees to refrain from using illegal drugs on or off duty.

"Revising the Mandatory Guidelines has taken a tremendous amount of coordination across stakeholders and agencies, over a period of several years," said Dr. Elinore McCance-Katz, the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). "We felt it necessary to make these revisions because of advances in science and technology and because of the increased misuse of prescription opioids."

The Interagency Coordinating Group Executive Committee composed of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Justice, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and the Office of Personnel Management, provides policy oversight of the Federal Drug-Free Workplace Program. SAMHSA administers the Program and also provides oversight for the National Laboratory Certification Program, which certifies laboratories to conduct forensic drug testing for federal agencies and federally-regulated industries.

By implementing workplace drug testing for four semi-synthetic opioids, HHS is continuing its efforts to prevent opioid addiction in support of President Trump's commitment to combat the opioid crisis. The long-term impact of implementing these revised guidelines will help ensure

safety in the workplace, especially in national security, public health, and public safety occupations that interact directly with the public.

Other changes in the revised UrMG include making methylenedioxyamphetamine an initial test analyte; removing methylenedioxyethylamphetamine from the standard drug testing panel; raising the lower pH cutoff from three to four for identifying specimens as adulterated; and requiring MRO requalification training and re-examination at least every five years after initial MRO certification. Changes to the UrMG were also made to, among other things, enhance clarity, incorporate current scientific terminology, and ensure consistency with the proposed Mandatory Guidelines for Federal Workplace Drug Testing Program for Oral Fluid once authorized.

Additional information, including frequently asked questions, is at <http://www.samhsa.gov/workplace>.