

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention  
Division of Workplace Programs**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Updated:** March 2005

- 1. Where can a Federal agency or federally regulated employer purchase urine quality control (QC) samples that can be submitted as blind samples along with donor specimens to a drug testing laboratory?**

An updated list is available on this website under the title Sources of Blind Samples or calling DWP at 240-276-2600 to request a faxed copy.

- 2. Where can I find a list of HHS-certified drug testing laboratories?**

The current list of HHS-certified laboratories is published in the Federal Register during the first week of each month. The list is then made available on this website under the title Certified Laboratories.

- 3. Where can I get a previous list of HHS-certified laboratories?**

Call DWP at 240-276-2600 and a copy will be mailed or faxed to you.

- 4. I would like information on testing for alcohol?**

Testing Federal agency employees for alcohol use/abuse is not a part of the HHS Federal Workplace Drug Testing Program. However, the Department of Transportation does permit its regulated industry employers to test its employees for alcohol. Call DOT at 202-366-3784 or visit the DOT website at [www.dot.gov/ost/dapc](http://www.dot.gov/ost/dapc) to access DOT regulations.

- 5. Which office is responsible for establishing the policies and guidelines for the Federal Workplace Drug Testing Program?**

Originally, the responsibility for establishing the policies for the Federal Workplace Drug Testing Program was given to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). In 1993, HHS reorganized several administrations and the responsibility for the workplace

program was given to the Division of Workplace Programs (DWP) within the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Please remember that NIDA is no longer associated with the workplace drug testing program.

**6. Where can I find a physician who can serve as Medical Review Officer (MRO) for my workplace drug testing program?**

Information on physicians serving as MROs can be found on this website under Medical Review Officers or at the following websites: [www.asam.org](http://www.asam.org), [www.acoem.org](http://www.acoem.org), [www.aamro.com](http://www.aamro.com).

**7. Where can I find help in setting up a workplace drug testing program for my business?**

SAMHSA maintains a helpline to specifically assist employers in establishing workplace drug testing programs. Call the Helpline at 1-800-967-5752.

**8. I am an employee (for example, truck driver, merchant mariner, pilot, etc) covered under the DOT regulations. Can you give me specific information on the DOT regulations?**

Please call DOT directly at 202-366-3784 or visit its website at [www.dot/ost/dapc](http://www.dot/ost/dapc).

**9. Where can I obtain information on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission fitness-for-duty program?**

Call the NRC program coordinator at 301-415-6474.

**10. Where can I find the program documents issued by the Division of Workplace Programs pertaining to the National Laboratory Certification Program?**

Several program documents issued by the Division of Workplace Programs are available on this website under the title [NLCP Program Documents](#).

**11. What percentage of random tests should be conducted each year for an employer to maintain an effective deterrence and detection program?**

There is no established optimum percentage of random tests that will ensure the most effective deterrence and detection program. Logically, a very small percentage (e.g., 5

percent) may not be sufficient to deter or detect someone abusing an illicit substance, while a very high percentage (e.g., 95 percent) might be much more than is needed to maintain an effective program. The Department of Transportation permits the percentage of random tests to vary depending on the positive rate. In some cases, an industry is permitted to test at a 10 percent random rate while another industry is required to test at a 50 percent rate. Please contact DOT at 202-366-3784 for additional information on its policy.

**12. How can my laboratory become an HHS-certified drug testing laboratory?**

A laboratory can obtain an application for the National Laboratory Certification Program by calling the NLCP contractor by calling 1-800-334-8571 and asking to speak with someone about the NLCP.

**13. How can I get my initial drug test kit approved for use by the HHS-certified laboratories?**

The Division of Workplace Programs does not approve the drug test kits used by laboratories to screen urine specimens. However, each laboratory is required to use only initial drug test kits that have been cleared for use as medical devices by the Food and Drug Administration. Additionally, after a laboratory chooses the test kits it would like to use for screening specimens, the laboratory is still required to validate its performance and satisfy all the requirements in the Mandatory Guidelines. Visit the FDA website at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) for more information.

**14. The Federal workplace drug testing program allows Federal agencies to test specimens for 5-drug classes, but I want to have my employees' specimens tested for several other drug classes. Are these other drug classes certified by the HHS National Laboratory Certification Program?**

No. HHS certification under the National Laboratory Certification Program only certifies laboratories to test federally regulated specimens for the 5-drug panel as described in the Mandatory Guidelines. HHS does not certify the tests for other drug classes or review the testing performed by certified laboratories for its private-sector clients. The only time private-sector specimens are possibly reviewed is when a laboratory tests private-sector specimens in batches that include federally regulated specimens. Only these private-sector specimens are considered to be tested under the Guidelines. From HHS' perspective, private-sector specimens tested in separate batches and/or for additional drug classes are not reviewed and are not considered to be tested under the Guidelines.

**15. Can I have a blood test rather than a urine drug test?**

Under no circumstance can a blood specimen be collected and tested as part of the

Federal Workplace Drug Testing Program administered by HHS. However, certain Federal agencies may collect other types of specimens as part of accident or criminal investigations. The testing of those specimens is not a part of this workplace program.

**16. How do I verify that a laboratory is certified?**

Check the list of certified laboratories on this website. Also, an applicant laboratory is not permitted to claim certification until it is actually certified.

**17. Where can I find the NLCP license number for a certified laboratory?**

HHS does not issue license numbers to the certified laboratories. Each laboratory receives a notice from the Administrator, SAMHSA, that the laboratory is certified as of a certain date. The laboratory maintains its certification from that date forward until either the laboratory withdraws from the program or its certification is revoked.

**18. How does a laboratory maintain its certification?**

The Mandatory Guidelines describe in detail what requirements the laboratory must satisfy in order to maintain its certification.

**19. Where can I get information on the number of drug tests conducted and the drug positive rates?**

An excellent source for information on drug test results can be found on the Quest Diagnostics website (<http://www.questdiagnostics.com/employersolutions/>). Quest updates its reports semiannually. The Institute for Drug-Free Workplace at 202-842-7400 is also a source of information on corporate drug testing programs.

**20. I need a drug test for my Coast Guard license. Where do I go to get one?**

You should first call your local Coast Guard district office. If the district office cannot help, specific instructions on how to take a drug test for a Coast Guard license are available on the Coast Guard website (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/moa/dtdir.htm>). A list of drug testing service agents who can assist mariners with satisfying the drug testing licensing requirements is available at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/moa/serpro.htm>. If you are unable to find this information, contact Coast Guard headquarters at 202-267-0684. Other than the list of HHS-certified laboratories, the Division of Workplace Programs cannot provide the information you need to satisfy the Coast Guard's requirements.

**21. How can a Federal employee obtain a drug test result?**

The Mandatory Guidelines give a Federal employee access to his or her drug test results and the records relating to his or her drug test. The request to obtain the information (commonly referred to a documentation package) must be in writing through the medical review officer (MRO) and the Federal agency. The laboratory sends the documentation to the MRO, and the MRO shares it with the employee and the Federal agency.

**22. Who pays for a drug test?**

Federal agencies pay for the testing of specimens collected for their workplace drug testing programs. For the private-sector, the employer usually pays for the drug test. If you are self-employed, then you are responsible for paying for the test.

**23. How long will a drug be detectable in urine?**

The time a drug is detectable in urine is dependent on a number of variables, such as metabolic rate, dose, how it was taken, and the cutoff concentration used by the laboratory to detect the drug. Generally, the drugs in the Federal program are detectable for several days after use.

**24. Is testing hair specimens better than testing urine specimens? I heard that drugs can be detected for several months in hair specimens.**

It is true that drugs can possibly be detected in hair for 3 to 6 months compared to several days for urine. However, this advantage does not necessarily apply in all circumstances of use and reasons for testing an individual. HHS has been evaluating hair, oral fluid, and sweat testing for the past few years, believes that each type of specimen has advantages and disadvantages, and that the testing of these alternative specimens are complementary to each other rather than equivalent or as a replacement. HHS has proposed Guidelines that would apply to the testing of these other types of specimens, and until the final Guidelines are published and implemented, the laboratory certification program will remain a urine testing program.

**25. How do the CLIA 88 regulations affect the laboratories that are HHS-certified under the National Laboratory Certification Program?**

The CLIA 88 regulations administered by the Health Care Financing Administration (HFCA) pertain primarily to clinical laboratories doing medical diagnostic testing. The HHS NLCP is for laboratories doing forensic workplace drug testing. Workplace drug testing is not considered to be for medical diagnosis or treatment. HHS-certified

laboratories are not required to comply with CLIA 88 for the testing they do under the HHS Mandatory Guidelines for federally regulated workplace drug testing programs. At this time, workplace drug testing for the private sector is not regulated by either CLIA 88 or the Mandatory Guidelines.

**26. Can you give me any information on treatment programs and use of methadone for treating heroin addicts?**

All treatment questions should be addressed to the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Visit the CSAT website at <http://csat.samhsa.gov> or call CSAT's Division of Pharmacologic Therapies at 240-276-2700.

Prepared by: Division of Workplace Programs