

Moving Public Transportation  
Into the Future

Testing Thresholds and Criteria:  
Reasonable Suspicion Decision Making

Presented by: Sean K. Oswald

RLS & Associates, Inc.

Oregon DOT  
July 2025

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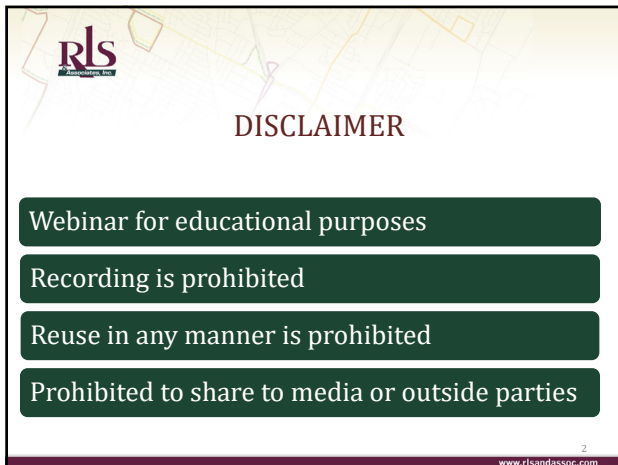
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WHAT MUST BE EVALUATED?

Must evaluate Specific, Contemporaneous, and Articulate observations concerning:

Appearance

Behavior

Speech

Body Odors

Only one trained supervisor or company official required

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## TYPICAL SUPERVISORY CONCERNS WITH REASONABLE SUSPICION REFERRALS

Loss of employee confidence/support

Jeopardizing employee's ability to make a living

Do not like confrontation

Possible loss of productivity

Lack of training on the referral process

Fear for personal safety

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## SUPERVISORS MUST KNOW:

Definition of  
Reasonable  
Suspicion

Definition of  
Role and  
Responsibility  
of Supervisors

Recognition  
of Signs and  
Symptoms of  
Drug Use

Recognition  
of Signs and  
Symptoms of  
Alcohol  
Misuse

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## SUPERVISORY TRAINING WILL ADDRESS:

Short-term indicators

Long-term indicators

Initiating, substantiating, and documenting the  
referral

Employee intervention

Recordkeeping/document event



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## SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE FACTS PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Observable physical evidence (drugs and paraphernalia)
- Symptoms of drug use and/or alcohol misuse
- Bloodshot or watery eyes
- Flushed or very pale complexion
- Extensive sweating or skin clamminess
- Dilated or constricted pupils
- Disheveled clothing/Unkempt Grooming
- Unfocused, Blank stare



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## SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE FACTS PHYSICAL INDICATORS



- Runny or bleeding nose
- Possible puncture marks
- Wetting lips frequently – complaining of dry mouth
- Nystagmus (involuntary jerky eye movement)
- Sensation of bugs crawling on skin

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## EXAMPLES OF DRUG PARAPHERNALIA



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Examples of Containers for Drugs

- Plastic baggies
- Small paper bags
- Make-up kits
- Various beverage bottles/ cans
- Plastic film canisters
- Cigarette packs
- Small glass vials
- Pill bottles
- Breath mint containers
- Inside candy or gum wrappers



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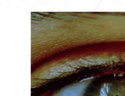
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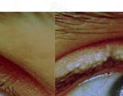
# DRUG AFFECTS ON PUPILS

Normal




Normal

Pinpoint

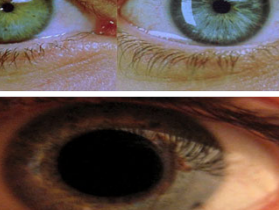


Pinpoint

Dilated



Dilated



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# SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE FACTS BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

- Hyperactivity – fidgety, agitated
- Breathing irregularly or with difficulty
- Nausea or vomiting
- Slow reactions
- Unstable walking
- Poor coordination
- Hand tremors



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## SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE FACTS

### BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

Suspicious, paranoid


Depressed, withdrawn

Lackadaisical attitude

Shaking

Irritable, moody

Extreme fatigue/sleeping on the job



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## SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE FACTS

### SPEECH INDICATORS

Slurred or slowed speech

Loud, boisterous

Quiet, whispering

Incoherent, nonsensical

Repetitious, rambling

Clicking sound with tongue

Rapid, pressured

Excessive talkativeness

Exaggerated enunciation

Cursing, inappropriate speech



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## SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE FACTS

### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Inability to concentrate

Impulsive, unusual risk-taking

Lack of motivation


Delayed decision-making

Diminished concentration

Impaired mental functioning

Reduced alertness

Significant increase in errors



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# SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE FACTS

## BODY ODORS

Odor of Alcohol on Breath or Clothes

Distinct Pungent Aroma on Clothing or Person

Smell of Cat Urine

Strong Chemical Odor

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# EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Flushing

Dizziness

Dulling of senses

Multiple Impairments

Loss of inhibitions

Staggering

Slurred speech

Double vision

Sudden mood changes

Unconsciousness

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# HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Alcoholism

Cancer

Brain Damage

High Blood Pressure, Stroke

Hepatitis and Cirrhosis of the Liver

Impotence and Infertility

Birth defects and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Premature aging

Kidney Damage

Pancreas Damage

Stomach & Duodenal Ulcers

Colitis

Many others

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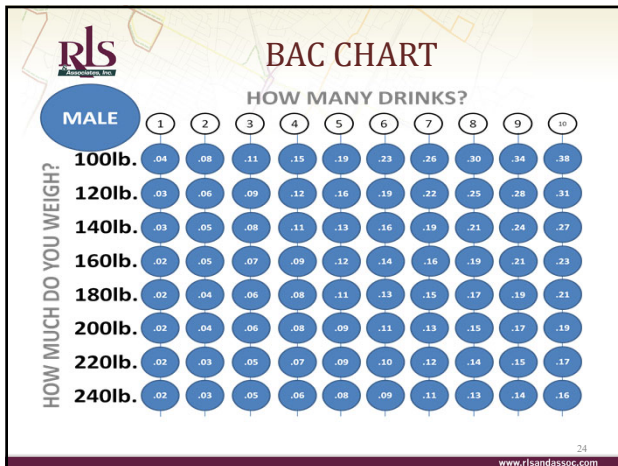
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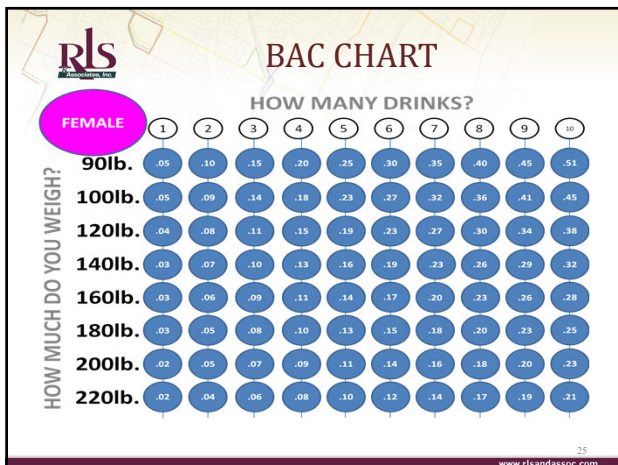
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# BAC CASE STUDY: MARGARET

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# BAC CASE STUDY: MARGARET



Margaret is a 140lb Female Paratransit Operator celebrating a friend's birthday on Thursday night.

Margaret has a total of {} of wine with her friends.

Margaret has to work Friday morning, so she has her last drink at Midnight and takes a taxi home.

Will Margaret be sober for her 9:00 AM Route on Friday?

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# BAC CASE STUDY: MARGARET

Margaret drank 33oz of wine

- This is equivalent to about 6 glasses of wine (5oz per glass)
- What was her BAC at midnight?

FEMALE

HOW MANY DRINKS?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
90lb.	.05	.10	.15	.20	.25	.30	.35	.40	.45	.51
100lb.	.05	.09	.14	.18	.23	.27	.32	.36	.41	.45
120lb.	.04	.08	.11	.15	.19	.23	.27	.30	.34	.38
140lb.	.03	.07	.10	.13	.16	.19	.23	.26	.29	.32
160lb.	.03	.06	.09	.11	.14	.17	.20	.23	.26	.28

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At Midnight, Margaret had a BAC of 0.19

- Is she sober for her 9:00AM Route?

↓

How many hours are required to have a BAC of 0.00?

- Alcohol metabolizes at a rate of around 0.015 BAC per hour
- Margaret's BAC = 0.19
- Lets divide that by 0.015
- $0.19 \text{ BAC} \div 0.015 \text{ per hour} = 12 \text{ hours } 40 \text{ minutes}$

↓

Margaret drove her transit bus at 9:00 AM

- After 9 hours of no drinking, her BAC would've still been at 0.055

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## DISCUSSION POINTS

What driving skills are affected by alcohol use?

Is the alcohol found in beer, wine, and liquor the same? Do they have the same impact?



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## DISCUSSION POINTS (CONTINUED)

Can drinking coffee, taking a cold shower, or getting fresh air help a person get sober before reporting to work?

What is the difference between alcohol use and alcohol abuse?



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## DISCUSSION POINTS (CONTINUED)

According to State law, what is the Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) that is considered illegal? What is the level established for a Commercial Driver's License? What is accepted by your transit system?

When does a hangover start and when does it end?

What skills required of public transportation employees are impaired by a hangover?

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## MARIJUANA



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## EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA USE

Slows reaction time

Decreases awareness of the road

Decreases awareness of vehicle control

Reduces peripheral vision

Diminishes estimates of time and distance

Impairs coordination

Impairs judgment

Impairs concentration

Diminishes capacity to perform complex functions

Reduces short term memory

Reduces awareness and perception of diminished skill levels



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# HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH MARIJUANA

Lung cancer\*\*

Toxic effects of chemicals in marijuana smoke

Effects of other unknown drugs added to joints

Brain damage

Accelerated heartbeat

Increased blood pressure

Decrease in body's immune system

Birth defects



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# EFFECTS ON DRIVING

After Alcohol- Marijuana is the most frequently detected psychoactive substance amongst driving populations

- Impairs driving performance for approximately 3 hours
- Decreased car handling
- Decreased reaction times
- Impaired distance estimation
- Inability to maintain headway
- Subjective sleepiness



Mixing alcohol and marijuana may dramatically produce effects greater than either drug on its own.

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# SAMPLE PICTURES OF MARIJUANA











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# COCAINE



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# EFFECTS OF COCAINE USE

Accelerated heart rate

Addiction

Constricted blood vessels

Seizures

Dilated pupils

Cardiac arrest

Increased blood pressure

Respiratory arrest

Nasal congestion

Stroke

Runny nose

Death

Loss of mucous membranes in the nose

Collapsed nasal septum

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# PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH COCAINE USE


Reckless

Impulsive

Unpredictable

Paranoid

False sense of power, control, alertness, well-being, confidence, and strength



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## DURATION OF EFFECTS

Injecting cocaine produces an effect in 15-30 seconds

A hit of smoked crack produces an almost immediate intense experience and will typically produce effects lasting 5-15 minutes

Snorting cocaine produces effects almost immediately and the resulting high many last 15-30 minutes



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## AFTER-EFFECTS OF COCAINE USE

Restlessness

Anxiety

Depression

Exhaustion

Mental Fatigue

Irritability

Paranoia

Intense craving for drug

Preoccupation with drug

Overall discomfort



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## OTHER CONDITIONS

Some other conditions may cause similar symptoms.

- Hyperactivity
- Nervousness
- Stress
- Fear
- Hypertension

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## EFFECTS OF CRACK USE

Short,  
intense high

Abrupt halt  
to high

Deep  
depression

Intense  
craving for  
more drug



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## EFFECTS OF WITHDRAWAL

"Crash" can last from 9 hours to 4 days

- Agitation
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Intense drug cravings

Withdrawal symptoms last from 1-3 weeks

- Fatigue
- Anxiety/ Irritability
- Paranoia
- Disorientation



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## DISCUSSION POINTS

What are common names for cocaine?

Besides the addiction and physical risks directly related with cocaine use, what are other risks?

Who are the potential victims of cocaine use by public transit professionals?

Why is crack considered so much more dangerous than cocaine?

Why do people become addicted?

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## COMMON NAMES FOR COCAINE

Coke

Blow

Snow

Speedball

Flake

Crack

Rock

Snort

White Girl

Freebase

Base

Eight-ball

King's Habit

Devil's Dandruff

Mighty White

Electric Kool-Aid

Uptown

Butter



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## POTENTIAL VICTIMS OF COCAINE USE BY PUBLIC TRANSIT PROFESSIONALS

Passengers

Others on the road

Co-workers

Transit system

Public confidence

Drug user

User's family

User's friends

Pedestrians

Society



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## EFFECTS ON DRIVING

Speeding

Losing control of vehicle

High-risk behaviors

Poor impulse control

Inattentive

Fatigue

Falling asleep at the wheel



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## AFTER-EFFECTS OF AMPHETAMINE USE

Depression

Confusion

Intense fatigue



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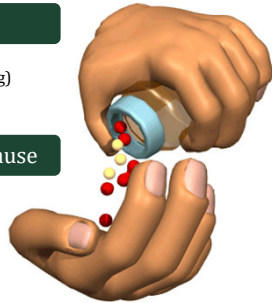
## EFFECTS OF WITHDRAWAL

"Crash" can last 1-3 days

- Intense fatigue
- Uncontrollable sleepiness (catnapping)
- Continuing stimulation
- Drug cravings

Abrupt discontinuation can cause

- Extreme fatigue
- Mental depression
- Apathy
- Long sleeping periods
- Irritability/ Disorientation



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## METHAMPHETAMINES



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## CHARACTERISTICS OF METHAMPHETAMINES

Synthetic drug


Stimulates movement and speed

Generates feelings of excitement

Results in nervousness, insomnia, and paranoia

Post use depression, fatigue, and inability to experience pleasure

Addictive



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## DISCUSSION POINTS

What are common street names for amphetamines and methamphetamines?

Why are amphetamines so commonly used in the transportation industry?

What is the difference between amphetamines and methamphetamines?

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## COMMON STREET NAMES FOR AMPHETAMINES/METHAMPHETAMINES

Speed

Uppers

Poppers

Meth

Bennies

Crank

White crosses

Ecstasy



Crystal

Tweak

Black Beauties

Dexies

Chalk

Glass

Truck Drivers

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# FACES OF METH



2000 "Faces of Meth" Theresa 2.5 Years Later



Mark "Faces of Meth"



"Faces of Meth" 2.5 Years Later



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# EFFECTS ON DRIVING

Driving off the road

High speeds

Failing to stop

Diminished attentiveness

Driving impatience

High risk driving



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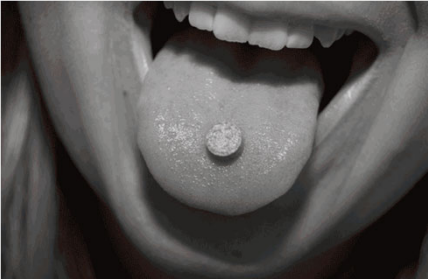
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# Ecstasy (MDMA)



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## Common Effects of Ecstasy

Impaired judgment	Muscle tension
False sense of affection	Fearlessness
Confusion	Chills and sweating
Depression	Involuntary teeth clenching
Sleep Problems	Blurred vision
Severe Anxiety	Nausea
Paranoia	Drug cravings

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## Discussion Points

- What is Ecstasy made from?
- Why is ecstasy dangerous and can it be lethal?
- Why is it dangerous to drive while using ecstasy?
- Why did the FTA start testing for ecstasy?
- What are some street names for ecstasy?

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## Ecstasy Street Names

Adam		Elephants
Eve		Skittles
Molly		Hug
Beans		Hug Drug
X		Roll
XC		Lovers Speed
XTC		Snow Ball
California Sunrise		Scooby Snacks
Clarity		Love Pill

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## DURATION OF EFFECTS

After oral ingestion, effects begin in 20-30 minutes and last an hour or more depending on the dosage

General effects last for 2-3 hours

Residual effects are usually gone within 24 hours but some effects last for several weeks

- Confusion
- Depression
- Anxiety



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## SIMILAR CONDITIONS

Some conditions may have similar symptoms

- Mental illness
- High fever



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## EFFECTS OF WITHDRAWAL

This drug is usually taken over the weekend

Effects occurring the following week include:

- Exhaustion
- Apathy
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Muscle tensions
- "Terrible Tuesdays"



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## EFFECTS ON DRIVING

Moderate effects on vehicle control

Acceptance of higher risk situations

Acute changes of cognitive performance

Impaired information processing



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## OPIOIDS



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## EFFECTS OF OPIOID USE

Relief of pain

Drowsiness

Restlessness

Disfigurement

Indifference

Relaxation

Slow reflexes

Accident prone

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## DISCUSSION POINTS

What are common street names for opioids?

How can opioids be obtained legally?

What other risk factors are associated with heroin use?

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## COMMON STREET NAMES FOR OPIOIDS

Heroin

Boy

Tar

Dog

Dog Food



Dope

Smack

Mexican brown

H

China white

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## DURATION OF EFFECTS

Intense euphoria lasts from 45 seconds to several minutes

Peak effects last 1-2 hours

Overall effects wear off in 3-5 hours, depending on the dosage



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## EFFECTS OF WITHDRAWAL

Can begin 6-13 hours after the last dose

- May last 5-10 days

Early symptoms include

- Watery eyes
- Runny nose
- Yawning
- Sweating



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## EFFECTS ON DRIVING

Slow

Weaving

Poor vehicle control

Poor coordination

Slow response times

Delayed reactions

Difficulty following directions

Falling asleep at the wheel



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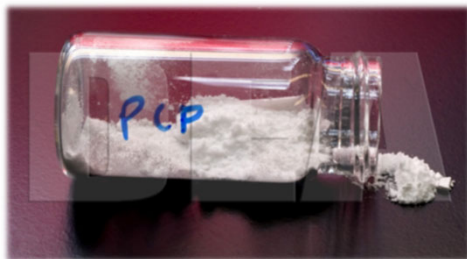
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## PHENCYCLIDINE



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## EFFECTS OF PHENCYCLIDINE USE

Unpredictable behavior

Departure from reality


Memory loss

Diminished concentration

Decreased sensitivity to pain

Extreme violence

Distorted senses



Alters mood and consciousness

Disorientation

Disturbed perception

Impaired judgment

Temporary insanity

Suicidal behavior

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## DURATION OF EFFECTS

1-30 minutes depending on the route of administration

Gradual decline of major effects over 4-6 hours

Return to "normal" may take 24 hours

Long-term effects may precipitate a psychotic reaction similar to schizophrenia

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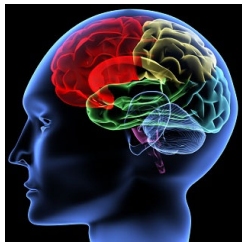
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## SIMILAR CONDITIONS

Other conditions that may cause similar symptoms

- Mental disorders (e.g., schizophrenia)



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## Intervention, Interaction, Referral

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## SUPERVISORY FUNCTIONS

Supervisor's role

- Realization/awareness of potential problem
- Looks for presence of other indicators

Supervisors should:

- Document changes over time
- Look for multiple indicators, since taken alone, each indicator could be caused by something other than substance abuse
- Document each reasonable suspicion testing referral as soon as possible following the observation

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## REFERRALS MUST SATISFY THREE KEY CRITERIA

Objective facts

Could another equally-trained supervisor come to the same conclusion

Less responsible not to require a test

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## INITIATING THE REFERRAL

Non-confrontational	Non-accusatory	Never solicit a confession
Private location	Think through what you are going to say	Anticipate questions/denials/threats

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## REASONABLE SUSPICION INTERVENTION AND REFERRAL

- Primary issue is safety
- Inquire and observe
- Review your findings
- Verify facts
- Make the reasonable suspicion decision
- Isolate and inform the employee
- Transport the employee (optional)
- Document events

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## FOCUS ON PERFORMANCE ISSUES!

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## SUPERVISORY DO'S

Know your employees

Document job performance regularly

Take action whenever job performance fails

Document objective facts that justify the test

Make sure unfit employees don't perform safety-sensitive job functions

Know how to get help for an employee

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## SUPERVISORY DON'TS

Try to get a confession

Diagnose an employee's problem as drug use and/or alcohol abuse

Discuss your suspicions with other non-supervisory employees

Accuse employee of having a substance abuse problem

Put in writing that an employee has a substance abuse problem

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## FRAMING THE INTERACTION

How you begin the conversation with the employee will determine:

- Win/lose outcome
- Win/win outcome



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## WIN/LOSE OUTCOME

"I think that you are under the influence of... I am sending you for reasonable suspicion testing."

- Positive test result :Employee 0, **Employer 1**
- Negative test result: **Employee 1**, Employer 0



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## WIN/WIN OUTCOME

"I am concerned about your readiness to perform safety-sensitive functions. I am required to refer you for a test to rule out chemical impairment."

- Positive test result: Employee 0, **Employer 1**
- Negative test result: **Employee 1**, **Employer 1**



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