

THE WHY, WHAT, AND HOW GUIDE

to workforce drug testing solutions that work

As workforce drug use trends up, make sure your company's testing strategy is ready.



Professional, Scientific, and Technical Industries

THE WHY

A rising need for robust and reliable drug testing

According to the **2022 Drug Testing Index® (DTI)**, an annual report examining positivity rates for drugs tested for employers across the country, America's workforce drug use is rising in 16 of the 17 industries tracked. In fact, 2021 reached the highest drug positivity rate since 2001 after a sharp upswing over the past 5 years.

Meanwhile, the correlation between drug use and workplace safety is clearer than ever as post-accident positivity has also increased over the past 5 years. As changes to state laws across the nation regarding legal uses of marijuana add new wrinkles to the story, employers must make sure their drug testing program is up to the task.

New realities demand new strategies

Drug use in the workplace isn't going away, as positivity rates continue to climb across industries. The question is: How can you maintain your company's safety, productivity, and reputation while continuing to grow your workforce? A comprehensive drug testing strategy is a strong start.

In this guide, we'll explore key requirements and recommendations tailored to the professional, scientific, and technical industries to ensure your drug testing program:

- Delivers the highest levels of quality, reliability, and integrity
- Evolves to maximize speed-to-hire and meet your changing needs
- Adapts to current drug use trends and business requirements
- Builds confidence with your corporate leadership team
- Respects employee rights and expectations with clear communications, streamlined experiences, and fair confirmation of results

Insights that inform

Our annual **Drug Testing Index®** offers in-depth insights into workforce drug use trends drawn from one of the world's largest pools of drug testing data, including more than 11 million deidentified specimens collected each year from companies across the nation.

We publish our findings as a public service to help government, employers, policymakers, and the general public make informed decisions.

[**Explore DTI insights**](#)



THE WHAT

A drug testing program that meets your real-world needs

When it comes to workforce drug testing, you can't afford to compromise. It may be tempting to view one drug test like any other, but it's important to recognize the distinct demands of your industry and address your company's operational requirements.

- Do you have a mix of remote and on-site workers?
- How often do you conduct hiring events?
- Do you ever hire temporary workers to scale up?
- What are your state's laws around marijuana use?

Your drug testing program must meet your needs without forcing tough choices around speed, quality, or coverage. And your testing partner must have the experience to navigate your industry and workforce challenges—at the scale and speed of your business. When evaluating potential partners, do your research.



REQUIREMENT:

Trusted partnership

Your drug testing partner should have the proven expertise to design a comprehensive strategy you can rely on—or develop significant enhancements to your current program—all while seamlessly integrating solutions that fit the unique requirements of your business, workforce, corporate footprint, and industry.



RECOMMENDATION:

Protect your reputation

Consider the risks to your business beyond operations. In high-stakes industries like yours, reputation matters—to partners, employment candidates, and current and prospective customers alike. Choose a drug testing partner with a strong reputation of its own, earned for delivering high levels of quality and responsiveness over time.

The merger of health and productivity

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a real toll on the nation's mental health, and the 2022 DTI shows corresponding spikes in workforce drug use.

A well-designed drug testing program can help you combat these concerns, better manage employee wellness, and positively impact critical health and productivity metrics by decreasing absenteeism, accidents, downtime, turnover, and theft. All those factors can improve workplace morale, your employees' mental health, and your company's reputation.

Integrity and experience matter now more than ever



REQUIREMENT:

Specimen validity testing

Testing specimen validity is a must to ensure integrity of the results. Consider urine testing, the most common drug testing type, yet one where donors can use household chemicals to “cleanse” their specimen—or where a prescribed medication may interfere with the initial screening. Specimen validity testing measures pH, creatinine, and specific gravity (when required) while checking for adulterants that may be added.



RECOMMENDATION:

Validate your partner's know-how

Seek a partner that provides specimen validity testing, automatically runs multiple tests with different parts of the urine specimen, reviews oxidant identification for common adulterants, and uses collection protocols that minimize tampering to begin with—all to ensure accuracy and boost confidence.



REQUIREMENT:

Real industry expertise

Your drug testing partner should have experience working with professional, scientific, or technical companies, the knowledge to discuss your specific requirements, and the know-how to meet the challenge. Look for:

“Look-alike” panels or drug testing sequences that mirror best-practice regulatory requirements

Testing method flexibility whether it's one-time pre-employment screens or periodic testing for safety-sensitive roles

Highly customizable programs and the expertise to help determine the best solutions for your workforce

Nationwide collection network with labs that leverage consistent methodology so workers can get back to work

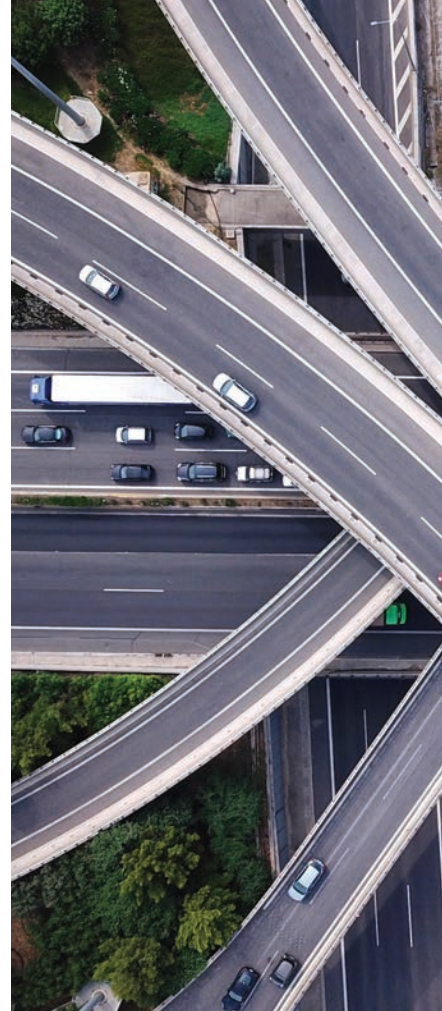
Robust educational resources to ensure your workforce understands the testing process and trusts the provider and lab



RECOMMENDATION:

Get real with your partners

Take the time to understand a potential partner's relevant experience, core capabilities, and how they would tailor their solutions for a workforce that may run the gamut from office staff to lab technicians to the C-suite. Ask for concrete learnings from working with companies like yours.





REQUIREMENT:

Credible accreditations

In high-pressure industries like yours, drug testing must be performed at the highest levels. Your partner's labs should hold and maintain:

- Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA-88)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) training
- College of American Pathologists (CAP) certification
- Applicable state licensure



RECOMMENDATION:

Stay flexible

Credibility is key, but so is a flexible strategy to guide decisions around testing methods. For example, urine testing may be the “gold standard” and is currently the only method approved for federally mandated testing, but other testing types will play a key role too—such as when your company needs a longer look-back into drug use.

THE HOW

The right tools can bring your testing program to life

To ensure success, your drug testing program needs an integrated mix of tools, solutions, and capabilities: testing types and panels that fit your business; respectful testing experiences to help you compete in a demanding labor market; and expert guidance to implement industry-tailored strategies that are optimized over time. Make sure your testing partner is ready.



REQUIREMENT:

Range of testing types

Your drug testing program should cover every potential testing scenario that could arise, including:



Pre-employment

Protects your business from the impacts of hiring drug users



Periodic

Conducted on a consistent basis to set employee expectations



Random or “spot”

Performed on an unannounced basis to deter drug use



Post-accident

Determines whether drugs played a role in the incident



Reasonable suspicion

Conducted if reasonable cause or evidence of employee drug use



Return-to-duty

For employees who previously tested positive or violated workplace policy



Follow-up

Administered after return-to-duty testing



RECOMMENDATION:

Map out your scenarios

Ask potential drug testing partners to provide their point of view on both defining the most relevant set of testing types for your business and establishing the processes and protocols for their use.

Integrated strategies for safety

Post-accident testing is required for safety-sensitive workforces. Yet with drug use rising across the professional, scientific, and technical industries, even employers not bound by federal regulations should consider integrated testing strategies. By combining random testing to deter drug use with post-accident testing to determine cause, you can gain insights into workplace safety to reduce risk.

From collections to results, process is paramount



REQUIREMENT:

Respectful collections

An effective drug testing program starts with a streamlined specimen collection process that enhances business operations, supports employees, and respects job candidates. In today's labor market, the complete testing experience matters. Your program should provide:

- Nearby access to collection facilities
- Easy online scheduling
- Clean, well-run facilities
- On-site collections as needed
- Timely drug test results
- Training for program managers
- Mobile, 24/7 emergency collections for post-accident or reasonable suspicion testing



RECOMMENDATION:

Provide a good experience

Consider how your potential drug testing partner discusses the candidate and employee experience, and ask them to share how they provide convenient, respectful specimen collection. Explore their program capabilities, facility locations, and training materials.



REQUIREMENT:

Timely results

Hitting deadlines is essential for any company. The same is true for drug testing programs. Business can't slow down—and managers shouldn't be left in the dark—as you await results. In an integrated program:

- Testing should be performed as soon as the specimen arrives at a provider's laboratory
- Negative results should be released quickly and positive results within a reasonable timeframe thereafter
- Results should integrate seamlessly into your workflow through an available online portal and HR applicant tracking platforms



RECOMMENDATION:

Clock the turnaround time

Seek a partner with test result turnaround times (TAT) that meet your expectations. Review their TAT statistics and examine documentation of their approach to testing workflow integration.



A deep dive into testing types

A drug testing partner should help you make informed, strategic, and confident decisions that match the right testing types to your real-world drug usage scenarios. Explore the most common testing types below as your business may require a combination. And ask your partner if their testing laboratory follows a 2-tiered process to ensure presumptive positive results are confirmed.

Urine testing

Detects drug use typically in the previous 1 to 3 days



Most common specimen type, broadly used for a wide range of testing purposes

Only specimen matrix currently approved for federally mandated testing; serves as the US Department of Labor standard for evidence of “current use”

Highly adaptable with panels available in hundreds of combinations of detectable drugs, test codes, and cutoff levels

Advantage

Considered to be the least-invasive form of testing

Disadvantage

Perceived as the easiest test to beat by adding adulterants to a specimen

Quick tip

Ask your testing partner how their labs detect the evolving variety of adulterants

Hair testing

Provides a 90-day lookback window



Trained collector takes a small hair sample from employee

Not useful for determining current drug use, or single-use scenarios, for reasonable suspicion or post-accident testing

Tests for amphetamine, cocaine, marijuana, phencyclidine, and a range of opiates

Advantage

Extremely difficult for donors to adulterate hair samples

Disadvantage

Challenging method for employees without head or body hair

Quick tip

Ask your testing partner how they manage employees unable or unwilling to provide a hair sample

Oral fluid testing

Detects recent drug use



Observed collection reduces the likelihood of tampering or a donor challenge

More accurately detects recent drug use than urine and hair testing

Tests for amphetamine, methamphetamine, cocaine, marijuana, PCP, oxycodones, and a range of opiates

Advantage

Minimizes perception of loss of privacy during specimen collection

Disadvantage

Long-term, habitual drug use is not detected as accurately as with hair testing

Quick tip

Ask your testing partner to demonstrate the ease and efficiency of their oral fluid collection device

Instant/point-of-care testing

Detects recent drug use with oral fluid and urine specimens



Rapid, minimally invasive method allows for on-site testing to maximize worker productivity

Observed collection reduces the likelihood of tampering or a donor challenge

FDA-compliant with accuracy greater than 98%

Advantage

Extremely difficult for donors to adulterate

Disadvantage

Requires on-site collector to read and document results

Quick tip

Ask your testing partner to explain how their instant testing protocols increase speed-to-results

THE WHO

A drug testing partner who preserves workplace safety and protects your business

Many companies view drug testing as a commodity. Yet to achieve your goals, it's critical to take a strategic approach to testing. So you can grow your workforce to meet demand. So you can maintain a safe workplace. So you can protect your company's valuable reputation.

Consider developing or updating your drug testing program to align with the requirements and recommendations in this guide—and finding a reliable partner who truly understands your needs.

Get ready to conduct business more confidently

When evaluating potential drug testing partners, dig deeper than core capabilities. Explore how their solutions address your specific business requirements. Make sure they're equipped to build and manage a productive, long-term relationship while treating employees with respect. Ask how they'll help you ramp up with confidence with protocols that include:

- A well-structured onboarding plan
- Dedicated project management for transition activities
- Assignment of an ongoing account management team

Most importantly, look for proven expertise, quality, and integrity—and a clear process to deliver the outcomes your business and reputation depend on.

Quest works at the speed of your business

Want to learn how?

Explore how Quest can support your comprehensive drug testing strategy at employersolutions.com

Ready to meet?

Start the conversation about your drug testing needs at questdiagnostics.com/letstalkdrugtesting

Resources

[SAMHSA Drug-Free Workplace Toolkit](#)

Provides useful information to help employers develop and manage drug-free workplace programs

[Quest Drug Testing Index®](#)

Details the latest trends in drug use for your industry—and in the regions where you do business

[Quest Professional Employer Resource Center](#)

Offers relevant drug testing information and insights for your industry