



DHS News
Oregon Department of Human Services

500 Summer St. NE E25, Salem, OR 97301-1098
Ph.: (503) 947-5050 • Fax: (503) 947-5461 • <http://egov.oregon.gov/DHS>

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Contact: Jim Sellers 503-945-5738

Program contacts: Karen Wheeler (DHS) 503-945-6191

Mimi Bushman (Workdrugfree) 503-293-0011 ext. 336

(Contact information for local business groups at end of news release)

Seven more business groups sign up for drug-free workplace initiative

A statewide initiative aimed at tripling the number of Oregon employers who adopt and enforce drug-free workplace policies by the end of 2008 is adding seven more communities as pilot sites.

The Oregon Department of Human Services initiative is adding two Portland business organizations and the chambers of commerce of Astoria-Warrenton, Cannon Beach, Keizer, McMinnville, Salem and Seaside.

Already participating in the effort, managed on contract by the Tualatin-based nonprofit Workdrugfree, were the Bend, Klamath County and Prineville-Crook County chambers.

“These business organizations see first-hand the harmful consequences of addiction,” said Karen Wheeler, DHS addictions policy manager. “By ensuring their workplaces are drug free, they are saying they care about customer safety, workforce quality and promoting the well-being of employees, families and communities.”

The drug-free workplace initiative is an element of the Oregon Business Plan, a 12-point strategy that state business leaders have crafted to strengthen the state’s commerce, payrolls and economy. DHS provides funding and staff support.

Mimi Bushman, who manages Workdrugfree as a program of the Oregon Nurses Foundation, said participating chambers will receive technical assistance to write drug-free workplace policies, train supervisors, join employee assistance programs and receive reduced rates on employee drug testing.

“Becoming a drug-free workplace will cost the small employer less than \$500 initially,” Bushman said, “and that cost should be more than offset by reducing employee absenteeism, accidents and other costly risks resulting from employee drug use.”

In their applications, the business groups said they wanted to build on the work already being done by businesses and others locally. The McMinnville chamber said 73 percent of businesses responding to a survey reported having drug-free policies in place, 42 percent said they test new employees and 25 percent conduct random testing, yet many employers need training to successfully implement policies.

The Portland application, submitted by the Portland Drug-Safe Workplace Advisory Board and the Portland Business Alliance, said businesses there have been working on the issue since 1987, that two 2005 drug forums were sold out and that drug use is an “issue of critical importance to business competitiveness.”

The three Clatsop County chambers and the Salem and Keizer chambers said they would collaborate as regional projects.

Among previously named sites, the Bend chamber has offered two company policy-writing workshops and a supervisor training; Klamath County chamber has conducted a survey of 500 businesses that expressed interest in drug-free assistance; and the Prineville-Crook County chamber will launch a four-part effort Nov. 3. Meanwhile, the Oregon Employment Department will conduct an employer survey this fall for Workdrugfree.

Bringing the share of drug-free workplaces to 75 percent statewide would triple the percentage reported in 2003.

Business organization contacts:

- Skip Hauke, Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce: 503-325-6311
- Christine Dieker, Keizer Chamber of Commerce 503-393-9111
- Celia Wheeler, McMinnville Area Chamber of Commerce 503-472-6196
- Wanda Pilakowski, Portland Drug-Safe Workplace 503-813-3991
- Mike McLaran, Salem Chamber of Commerce: 503-581-1466 ext. 302

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