

§685. Action taken on substance use tests

Action taken by an employer on the basis of a substance use test is limited as provided in this section. [PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §109 (AMD).]

1. Before receipt of test results. An employer may suspend an employee with full pay and benefits or may transfer the employee to another position with no reduction in pay or benefits while awaiting an employee's test results.

[PL 1989, c. 536, §§1, 2 (NEW); PL 1989, c. 604, §§2, 3 (AFF).]

2. Use of confirmation test results. This subsection governs an employer's use of confirmed positive results and an employee's or applicant's refusal to submit to a test requested or required by an employer in compliance with this subchapter.

A. Subject to any limitation of the Maine Human Rights Act or any other state law or federal law, an employer may use a confirmed positive result or refusal to submit to a test as a factor in any of the following decisions:

- (1) Refusal to hire an applicant for employment or refusal to place an applicant on a roster of eligibility;
- (2) Discharge of an employee;
- (3) Discipline of an employee; or
- (4) Change in the employee's work assignment. [PL 1995, c. 324, §7 (AMD).]

A-1. An employer who tests a person as an applicant and employs that person prior to receiving the test result may take no action on a positive result except in accordance with the employee provisions of the employer's approved policy. [PL 1995, c. 324, §8 (NEW).]

B. Before taking any action described in paragraph A in the case of an employee who receives an initial confirmed positive result, an employer shall provide the employee with an opportunity to participate for up to 6 months in a rehabilitation program designed to enable the employee to avoid future use of a substance and to participate in an employee assistance program, if the employer has such a program. The employer may take any action described in paragraph A if the employee receives a subsequent confirmed positive result from a test administered by the employer under this subchapter. [PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §109 (AMD).]

C. If the employee chooses not to participate in a rehabilitation program under this subsection, the employer may take any action described in paragraph A. If the employee chooses to participate in a rehabilitation program, the following provisions apply.

(1) If the employer has an employee assistance program that offers counseling or rehabilitation services, the employee may choose to enter that program at the employer's expense. If these services are not available from an employer's employee assistance program or if the employee chooses not to participate in that program, the employee may enter a public or private rehabilitation program.

(a) Except to the extent that costs are covered by a group health insurance plan, the costs of the public or private rehabilitation program must be equally divided between the employer and employee if the employer has more than 20 full-time employees. This requirement does not apply to municipalities or other political subdivisions of the State or to any employer when the employee is tested because of the alcohol and controlled substance testing mandated by the federal Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991, Public Law 102-143, Title V. If necessary, the employer shall assist in financing the cost share of the employee through a payroll deduction plan.

(b) Except to the extent that costs are covered by a group health insurance plan, an employer with 20 or fewer full-time employees, a municipality or other political subdivision of the State is not required to pay for any costs of rehabilitation or treatment under any public or private rehabilitation program. An employer is not required to pay for the costs of rehabilitation if the employee was tested because of the alcohol and controlled substance testing mandated by the federal Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991, Public Law 102-143, Title V.

(2) An employer may not take any action described in paragraph A while an employee is participating in a rehabilitation program, except as provided in subparagraph (2-A) and except that an employer may change the employee's work assignment or suspend the employee from active duty to reduce any possible safety hazard. Except as provided in subparagraph (2-A), an employee's pay or benefits may not be reduced while an employee is participating in a rehabilitation program, provided that the employer is not required to pay the employee for periods in which the employee is unavailable for work for the purposes of rehabilitation or while the employee is medically disqualified. The employee may apply normal sick leave and vacation time, if any, for these periods.

(2-A) A rehabilitation or treatment provider shall promptly notify the employer if the employee fails to comply with the prescribed rehabilitation program before the expiration of the 6-month period provided in paragraph B. Upon receipt of this notice, the employer may take any action described in paragraph A.

(3) Except as provided in divisions (a) and (b), upon successfully completing the rehabilitation program, as determined by the rehabilitation or treatment provider after consultation with the employer, the employee is entitled to return to the employee's previous job with full pay and benefits unless conditions unrelated to the employee's previous confirmed positive result make the employee's return impossible. Reinstatement of the employee may not conflict with any provision of a collective bargaining agreement between the employer and a labor organization that is the collective bargaining representative of the unit of which the employee is or would be a part. If the rehabilitation or treatment provider determines that the employee has not successfully completed the rehabilitation program within 6 months after starting the program, the employer may take any action described in paragraph A.

(a) If the employee who has completed rehabilitation previously worked in an employment position subject to random or arbitrary testing under an employer's written policy, the employer may refuse to allow the employee to return to the previous job if the employer believes that the employee may pose an unreasonable safety hazard because of the nature of the position. The employer shall attempt to find suitable work for the employee immediately after refusing the employee's return to the previous position. A reduction may not be made in the employee's previous benefits or rate of pay while the employee is awaiting reassignment to work or working in a position other than the previous job. The employee must be reinstated to the previous position or to another position with an equivalent rate of pay and benefits and with no loss of seniority within 6 months after returning to work in any capacity with the employer unless the employee has received a subsequent confirmed positive result within that time from a test administered under this subchapter or unless conditions unrelated to the employee's previous confirmed positive test result make that reinstatement or reassignment impossible. Placement of the employee in suitable work and reinstatement may not conflict with any provision of a collective bargaining agreement between the employer and a labor organization that is the collective bargaining representative of the unit of which the employee is or would be a part.

(b) Notwithstanding division (a), if an employee who has successfully completed rehabilitation is medically disqualified, the employer is not required to reinstate the

employee or find suitable work for the employee during the period of disqualification. The employer is not required to compensate the employee during the period of disqualification. Immediately after the employee's medical disqualification ceases, the employer's obligations under division (a) attach as if the employee had successfully completed rehabilitation on that date. [PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §109 (AMD).]

D. This subsection does not require an employer to take any disciplinary action against an employee who refuses to submit to a test, receives a single or repeated confirmed positive result or does not choose to participate in a rehabilitation program. This subsection is intended to set minimum opportunities for an employee with a substance use problem to address the problem through rehabilitation. An employer may offer additional opportunities, not otherwise in violation of this subchapter, for rehabilitation or continued employment without rehabilitation. [PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §109 (AMD).]

[PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §109 (AMD).]

3. Confidentiality. This subsection governs the use of information acquired by an employer in the testing process.

A. Unless the employee or applicant consents, all information acquired by an employer in the testing process is confidential and may not be released to any person other than the employee or applicant who is tested, any necessary personnel of the employer and a provider of rehabilitation or treatment services under subsection 2, paragraph C. This paragraph does not prevent:

(1) The release of this information when required or permitted by state or federal law, including release under section 683, subsection 8, paragraph D; or

(2) The use of this information in any grievance procedure, administrative hearing or civil action relating to the imposition of the test or the use of test results. [PL 1989, c. 536, §§1, 2 (NEW); PL 1989, c. 604, §§2, 3 (AFF).]

B. Notwithstanding any other law, the results of any substance use test required, requested or suggested by any employer may not be used in any criminal proceeding. [PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §109 (AMD).]

[PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §109 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1989, c. 536, §§1,2 (NEW). PL 1989, c. 604, §§2,3 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 832, §§12,13 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 324, §§7,8 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 344, §1 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 547, §3 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 407, Pt. A, §109 (AMD).

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