

# Evolving Standards: The Debate Over MDMA and Fentanyl in Workplace Drug Tests

## **Federal Workforce Drug Testing: Proposed Changes**

Federal officials are currently reviewing proposed adjustments to the guidelines governing drug testing in the federal workforce. These potential changes could have significant implications for the substances screened and the overall approach to ensuring workplace safety.

### **MDMA Removal Consideration**

One notable consideration in the proposed changes is the potential removal of MDMA from the list of substances screened in federal drug tests. MDMA, also known as ecstasy, has shown low occurrence in urine samples during recent years. As such, officials are evaluating whether its inclusion in mandatory drug tests remains justified.

### **Addition of Fentanyl**

Conversely, the proposed changes suggest the addition of fentanyl to the list of substances screened in federal drug tests. Fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid, has become increasingly prevalent in unregulated drug markets and is associated with a significant proportion of overdose deaths in the United States.

### **SAMHSA's Drug Testing Advisory Board Meeting**

Discussions surrounding these proposed changes took place at a recent meeting of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Drug Testing Advisory Board (DTAB). The board advises on drug testing and laboratory certification activities within SAMHSA.

### **Understanding MDMA and Fentanyl**

The consideration to remove MDMA from mandatory drug tests reflects its relatively low prevalence in workplace urine samples. Conversely, the addition of fentanyl aligns with its widespread presence in the illicit drug market and its role in the current opioid crisis.

### **Financial Considerations**

Financial implications play a significant role in evaluating these proposed changes. While the removal of MDMA and related substances may lead to cost savings, the addition of fentanyl screening is expected to incur additional expenses due to the complexity of testing for this potent opioid.

### **Positivity Rate Analysis**

SAMHSA has conducted analyses of positivity rates for various substances to inform the decision-making process. These analyses provide valuable insights into the prevalence of different drugs in workplace drug tests and help determine the necessity of including them in screening panels.

## **Addressing the Overdose Crisis**

Advocates have raised concerns about the potential impact of these changes on public safety, particularly regarding overdose prevention efforts. While fentanyl screening may address concerns related to opioid misuse, some argue that resources would be better allocated to evidence-based treatment and harm reduction initiatives.

## **Review Process and Next Steps**

The proposed changes are currently undergoing review, including feedback from stakeholders and the public. This process allows for thorough consideration of the potential benefits and drawbacks of the proposed adjustments before any final decisions are made.

## **Adapting Drug Testing Practices**

These proposed changes reflect broader shifts in drug laws and usage patterns, prompting organizations to adapt their drug testing protocols accordingly. By staying responsive to emerging challenges and trends, policymakers and employers can better ensure the safety and well-being of their workforce.

Email: [info@cannabisriskmanager.com](mailto:info@cannabisriskmanager.com) | Phone: +415-226-4060

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