

Part 40 Questions and Answers (Abridged)

Interpretation and guidance Related to Part 40

from DOT's Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance

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PART 40 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – (Abridged)

The Office of General Counsel and Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance of the Department of Transportation are providing these questions and answers. They constitute official and authoritative guidance and interpretation concerning 49 CFR Part 40.

For continuity, the questions have been re-ordered by Part 40 regulation number. The date at the end of each question indicates the date that the clarification was issued.

DEFINITIONS

§40.3

QUESTION #1:

Can the employer himself or herself act as a Designated Employer Representative (DER), as opposed to appointing another employee to play this role?

ANSWER:

- o The employer (e.g., the owner of a small business) may act personally as the DER.
- o The employer may also appoint an employee or employees to play this role.
- o The DER must exercise his or her authority to remove an employee from safety sensitive functions either directly or by causing the employee to be removed from performing these functions (e.g., by having the employee’s supervisor effect the actual removal).
- o The employer may not delegate the DER role to a service agent. Only the employer or an actual employee of the employer may perform this function.
- o The Department will not authorize a “DER-for-hire” concept (e.g., a person under contract by several companies to serve as their DER), either.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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QUESTION #2:

If a C/TPA is hired as an “independent safety consultant” that executes all aspects of the employer’s safety and drug and alcohol testing programs, can the C/TPA act as a DER?

ANSWER:

- o Service agents are prohibited from acting as DERs under any circumstances.
- o The fact that an organization that is called an “independent safety consultant” acts as a consultant to an employer for purposes of executing a drug and alcohol testing or safety program does not make it any less a service agent. It is still prohibited from acting as a DER.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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STAND DOWN

§40.21

QUESTION #1:

Can union hiring halls, driver-leasing companies, and other entities have a stand-down policy, or is the ability to obtain a waiver for this purpose limited to actual employers?

ANSWER:

- o The rule permits “employers” to apply for a stand-down waiver. It does not permit any other entity to do so.
- o Only entities that are viewed as “employers” for purposes of DOT agency drug and alcohol testing regulations can apply for stand-down waivers. If a DOT agency rule provides that hiring halls, leasing agencies, etc. are treated as employers, such organizations could apply for a stand-down waiver.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #2:

Does an employer need a stand-down waiver in order to implement a policy that requires employees to cease performing safety-sensitive functions following a reasonable suspicion or post-accident test?

ANSWER:

- o §40.21 requires an employer to obtain a waiver to do one very specific thing: remove employees from performance of safety-sensitive functions on the basis of the report of confirmed laboratory test results that have not yet been verified by the MRO.
- o An employer does not need a §40.21 waiver to take other actions involving the performance of safety-sensitive functions.
- o For example, an employer could (if it is not prohibited by DOT agency regulations and it is consistent with applicable labor-management agreements) have a company policy saying that, on the basis of an event (e.g., the occurrence of an accident that requires a DOT post-accident test, the finding of reasonable suspicion that leads to a DOT reasonable suspicion test), the employee would immediately stop performing safety-sensitive functions. Such a policy, which is not triggered by the MRO’s receipt of a confirmed laboratory test result, would not require a §40.21 waiver.
- o It would not be appropriate for an employer to remove employees from performance of safety-sensitive functions pending the result of a random or follow-up test, since there is no triggering event to which the action could rationally be tied.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #3:

If an employee fails to provide a sufficient amount of urine during an observed collection, can an employer remove the employee from performing safety-sensitive functions pending receipt of the verified result from the Medical Review Officer (MRO)?

ANSWER:

- o The Department believes an employee’s failing to provide a sufficient amount of urine during a directly observed collection is very similar to a laboratory’s reporting a positive, adulterated, or substituted test result to MRO.
- o While we do not believe it is appropriate for an employer to remove the employee from safety-sensitive duties until receiving the MRO’s verified result, we think stand-down waiver provisions could be relevant.
- o Therefore, employers can apply for a stand-down waiver that would permit the employee to be removed from safety-sensitive duties when he or she does not provide an adequate amount of urine during an observed collection.
- o The waiver request would need to meet all criteria outlined at §40.21 and should reference the fact that it is for standing an employee down who fails to provide an adequate amount of urine during an observed collection.
- o The §40.21 waiver request for laboratory positive, adulterated, and substituted results will continue to be evaluated separately.

ODAPC Guidance, July 2006

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OBTAINING INFORMATION FROM A PREVIOUS EMPLOYER

§40.25

QUESTION #1:

May the previous employer delay sending an employee’s drug and alcohol testing information to the gaining employer pending payment for the cost of the information?

ANSWER:

- o No. Part 40 specifically requires that previous employers immediately provide the gaining employer with the appropriate drug and alcohol testing information.

- o No one (i.e., previous employer, service agent [to include C/TPA], employer information / data broker) may withhold this information from the requesting employer pending payment for it.

ODAPC Guidance, November 2003

QUESTION #2:

If an applicant admits to testing positive on or refusing to take a pre-employment test within the past two years, must the applicant be held out of safety-sensitive duties if he or she did not complete the return-to-duty process (i.e., the SAP process)?

ANSWER:

- o If the applicant admits that he or she had a positive or a refusal to test result on a pre-employment test, the employer is not permitted to use the applicant to perform safety-sensitive duties until and unless the applicant documents successful completion of the return-to-duty process.
- o This Part 40 requirement applies whether or not the pre-employment positive or refusal occurred before, on, or after August 1, 2001.
- o Should no proof exist that the return-to-duty process was successfully complied with by the applicant, a current return-to-duty process must occur before the individual can again perform safety-sensitive functions.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

QUESTION #3:

Will FMCSA- and FAA-regulated employers complying with the drug and alcohol information records check requirements contained in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) regulation 49 CFR Part 391 and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Pilot Record Improvement Act be considered compliant with §40.25?

ANSWER:

- o Yes. Employers who are required by and who comply with the FMCSA's three-year requirement for obtaining and providing employee drug and alcohol testing information are considered to have satisfied the two-year requirement contained in §40.25.
- o Likewise, employers who are required by and who comply with the FAA's five-year requirement for obtaining and providing employee drug and alcohol testing information are considered to have satisfied the two-year requirement contained in §40.25.
- o These employers do not need to seek separately the §40.25 information if the employer adheres to the FMCSA and FAA regulations, as appropriate, for obtaining an employee's prior drug and alcohol testing information.

ODAPC Guidance, June 2004

QUESTION #4:

When an employee leaves an employer for a period of time (but not exceeding two years) and returns to that same employer, must the employer once again seek to obtain information it may have received previously from other employers?

ANSWER:

- o No. If the information received previously is still on file with the employer, the employer need not seek to obtain the testing data again.
- o However, the employer must seek information from all other employers for whom the employee performed safety-sensitive duties since the employee last worked for the employer.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

QUESTION #5:

When an employer is inquiring about an applicant's previous DOT drug and alcohol test results, is the employer required to send the inquiry via certified mail?

ANSWER:

- o No. Certified mail is not required.
- o The employer can make this inquiry through a variety of means, including mail (certified or not), fax, telephone, or email.
- o However, the employer must provide the former employer the signed release or a faxed or scanned copy of the employee's signed release.
- o The former employer must respond via a written response (e.g., fax, letter, email) that ensures confidentiality.
- o The employer should document an attempt or attempts to contact and contacts with previous employers, no matter how they were made, so that it can show a good faith effort to obtain the required information.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #6:

When a previous employer receives an inquiry from a new employer for drug and alcohol testing information, does the previous employer provide information it may have received from other employers in the past?

ANSWER:

- o As an employer, when you receive an inquiry about a former employee, you must provide all the information in your possession concerning the employee's DOT drug and alcohol tests that occurred in the two years preceding the inquiry.
- o This includes information you received about an employee from a former employer (e.g., in response to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's pre-employment inquiry requirement).
- o It is not a violation of Part 40 or DOT agency rules if you provide, in addition, information about the employee's DOT drug and alcohol tests obtained from former employers that dates back more than two years ago.
- o If you are an employer regulated by the FAA, this does not impact your requirements under the Pilot Record Act.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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EMPLOYER AND CONSENT FORMS

§40.27

QUESTION #1:

Are employers and their service agents in the Department of Transportation (DOT) drug and alcohol testing program required to obtain employee written authorizations in order to disclose drug and alcohol testing information?

ANSWER:

- o In the DOT drug and alcohol testing program, employers and service agents are not required to obtain written employee authorization to disclose drug and alcohol testing information where disclosing the information is required by 49 CFR Part 40 and other DOT Agency & U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) drug and alcohol testing regulations. 49 CFR Part 40 and DOT Agency & USCG regulations provide for confidentiality of individual test-related information in a variety of other circumstances.
- o Even if drug and alcohol testing information is viewed as protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) rules, it is not necessary to obtain employee written authorization where DOT requires the use or disclosure of otherwise protected health information

under 49 CFR Part 40 or the other DOT Agency & USCG drug and alcohol testing regulations.

- o Unless otherwise stipulated by 49 CFR Part 40 or DOT Agency & USCG regulations, use or disclosure of the DOT drug and alcohol testing information without a consent or authorization from the employee is required by the Omnibus Transportation Employees Testing Act of 1991, 49 CFR Part 40, and DOT Agency & USCG drug and alcohol testing regulations.
- o Consequently, an employer or service agent in the DOT program may disclose the information without the written authorization from the employee under many circumstances. For example:
 1. Employers need no written authorizations from employees to conduct DOT tests.
 2. Collectors need no written authorizations from employees to perform DOT urine collections, to distribute Federal Drug Testing Custody and Control Forms, or to send specimens to laboratories.
 3. Screening Test Technicians and Breath Alcohol Technicians need no written authorizations from employees to perform DOT saliva or breath alcohol tests (as appropriate), or to report alcohol test results to employers.
 4. Laboratories need no written authorizations from employees to perform DOT drug and validity testing, or to report test results to Medical Review Officers (MROs).
 5. MROs need no written authorizations from employees to verify drug test results, to discuss alternative medical explanations with prescribing physicians and issuing pharmacists, to report results to employers, to confer with Substance Abuse Professionals (SAPs) and evaluating physicians, or to report other medical information (see §40.327).
 6. SAPs need no written authorizations from employees to conduct SAP evaluations, to confer with employers, to confer with MROs, to confer with appropriate education and treatment providers, or to provide SAP reports to employers.
 7. Consortia/Third Party Administrators need no written authorizations from employees to bill employers for service agent functions that they perform for employers or contract on behalf of employers.
 8. Evaluating physicians need no written authorizations from employees to report evaluation information and results to MROs or to employers, as appropriate.
 9. Employers and service agents need no written authorizations from employees to release information to requesting Federal, state, or local safety agencies with regulatory authority over them or employees.

ODAPC Guidance, July 2006

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COLLECTORS AND COLLECTIONS

§40.33

QUESTION #1:

If a collector makes a mistake resulting in a cancellation of a test before he or she has obtained qualification training (e.g., in the period before January 31, 2003), does he or she have to obtain error correction training under §40.33(f)?

ANSWER:

- o Yes. If a collector makes a mistake that causes a test to be cancelled, the collector must undergo error correction training (even if the collector has yet to undergo qualification training). There are no exceptions to this requirement.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #2:

A collector who is notified that he or she made a mistake has 30 days in which to obtain error correction training. Can the collector continue to perform DOT collections during this 30-day period?

ANSWER:

- o Yes. A collector may continue to perform DOT collections during this period.
- o After 30 days have elapsed following the notification to the collector of the need to obtain error correction training, the collector is no longer qualified to conduct DOT collections until and unless he or she has successfully completed error correction training.
- o As provided in §40.209(b)(3), collection of a specimen by a collector who has not met training requirements does not result in the cancellation of the test, assuming the collection is otherwise proper. However, use of an unqualified collector can result in enforcement action.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #3:

Who is responsible for notifying a collector that error correction training is needed?

ANSWER:

- o The MRO, in canceling a drug test, will determine if the collector is at fault.
- o When the MRO reports the cancelled test to the employer, the MRO will note the reason for the cancellation and that, if appropriate, it was the result of collector error.
- o The employer or service agent (e.g., MRO, C/TPA) designated by the employer is responsible for notifying the collection site of the error and the retraining requirement; and for ensuring that the training takes place.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #4:

Must collectors, BATs, STTs, MROs, and SAPs maintain documentation of meeting training requirements on their persons?

ANSWER:

- o These individuals are responsible for maintaining documentation that they currently meet all training requirements (see, for example, §40.33(g)).
- o However, they are not required to keep this documentation on their person.
- o They must be able to produce this documentation within a short, reasonable time of a request by a DOT representative or an employer.
- o Nothing precludes an organization (e.g., a collection site) from also maintaining a file of the training records of its personnel, if it wishes to do so.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #5:

What does the rule require with respect to the qualifications of persons who train collectors?

ANSWER:

- o Part 40 does not specify any set of specific qualifications for persons who train collectors.
- o The training must cover the items required by Part 40.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #6:

Does a person who monitors proficiency demonstrations as a part of collector qualification training have to be a qualified collector?

ANSWER:

- o Yes. It is very important for persons who monitor mock collections to have a thorough “book” and practical knowledge of relevant DOT rules and procedures. It is also very important that, before determining whether trainees have successfully completed a proficiency demonstration, the monitor have experienced and successfully completed the same training that collectors have to undergo.
- o Consequently, mock collection monitors have to meet collector qualification training requirements. In addition, the monitor must meet any one of three other requirements:
 1. The monitor can be a qualified collector who has regularly conducted DOT drug testing collections for a least a year before serving as a monitor; or
 2. The monitor can be a qualified collector who has had a “train-the-trainer” course. Such a course could include the mandatory elements of collector qualification training as well as instruction on how to conduct training effectively; or
 3. The monitor can be a qualified collector who has conducted collector training under Part 40 for at least a year before serving as a monitor.
- o Monitors in the second and third categories do not need to practice actively as collectors, so long as they have met collector qualification requirements.
- o Individuals acting as collectors prior to August 1, 2001, have until January 31, 2003, to meet qualification training requirements. In the meantime, such collectors can serve as monitors even though they may not have met the qualification and mock collection requirements (so long as they meet any one of the three other requirements).

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #7:

Is error correction training required if a drug test is cancelled due to a specimen having an insufficient amount of urine?

ANSWER:

- o If the laboratory finds there is an insufficient amount of urine in the primary bottle for analysis, the laboratory will report to the MRO that the specimen is “rejected for testing” (unless the laboratory can redesignate the specimens). Subsequently, the MRO must cancel the test.
- o The MRO should seek to determine (with the assistance of the laboratory) if the specimen leaked in transit or if not enough urine was collected.
- o Specimen leakage while in transit to a laboratory will not cause a cancellation requiring the collector to have error correction training.
- o If the laboratory finds no evidence of leakage, indications would be strong that the collector failed to collect the appropriate amount of urine. If this were the case, the collector would need error correction training.
- o If specimen leakage is a recurrent problem for a collection site, the MRO may be wise to inquire whether or not the shipping containers used are sufficient to adequately protect the specimens or whether or not collectors are securing the bottle lids properly.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

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DIRECT OBSERVATION

§40.67

QUESTION #1:

Can the monitor (or direct observer) of a collection be a co-worker or immediate supervisor of the employee?

ANSWER:

- o The immediate supervisor of a particular employee may not act as the collector when that employee is tested, unless no other collector is available and the supervisor is permitted to do so under a DOT operating administration’s drug and alcohol regulation.
- o The immediate supervisor may act as a monitor or observer (if same gender) if there is no alternate method at the collection site to conduct a monitored or observed collection.
- o An employee who is in a safety-sensitive position and subject to the DOT drug testing rules should not be a collector, an observer, or a monitor for co-workers who are in the same testing pool or who work together with that employee on a daily basis.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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MEDICAL REVIEW OFFICER

§40.131

QUESTION #1:

Is it appropriate for the MRO to attempt to contact the employee after normal office hours?

ANSWER:

- o Yes. Copy 2 of the CCF contains spaces for the employee’s daytime and evening telephone numbers. We expect MROs or their staffs to attempt to contact the employee at the evening phone number if the employee is not available at the daytime number.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

QUESTION #2:

Must an MRO use the full 24-hour period to contact the donor if the MRO is sure that the donor is not and will not be available at the phone numbers provided by the donor?

ANSWER:

- o §40.131(a)(1) states that if the phone numbers provided by the donor are wrong, an MRO may contact the DER to inform the donor to contact the MRO without waiting the full 24 hours.
- o If the MRO discovers that phone numbers provided by the donor will not permit the MRO to contact the donor within the 24-hour period, the MRO may contact the DER immediately. For example, the MRO may discover that the employee is not expected to be available for another five days at the number provided.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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§40.141

QUESTION #1:

Is a Medical Review Officer (MRO) permitted to accept an employee’s prescription for medication obtained over the Internet?

ANSWER:

- o An MRO is authorized to accept an employee’s prescription for medication obtained over the Internet only if there is proof that a legitimate doctor-patient relationship had been established.

- o The following four elements generally serve as an indication that a legitimate doctor-patient relationship has been established:
 1. A patient has a medical complaint;
 2. A medical history has been taken;
 3. A physical examination has been performed; and
 4. Some logical connection exists between the complaint, the medical history, the physical examination, and the drug prescribed.
- o Standing alone, the completion of an online questionnaire reviewed later by a pharmacy-employed doctor fails to establish a proper doctor-patient relationship.
- o The MRO should, at a minimum, consider the following items when verifying the test result:
 1. The name, physical location, and state(s) of licensure of the prescribing practitioner;
 2. Whether the employee was professionally evaluated for the current medical complaint by the prescribing practitioner, and the last time the employee was in direct contact with the prescribing practitioner;
 3. Whether the employee initiated the request to the pharmacy for a particular medication; and
 4. Whether a proper doctor-patient relationship existed.
 5. It is the employee's responsibility to provide sufficient documentation to address MRO inquiries as to whether there was a legitimate doctor-patient relationship.

ODAPC Guidance, July 2006

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§40.149

QUESTION #1:

Can arbitrators change or overturn the MRO's determination about the verification of a test result?

ANSWER:

- o No. The MRO is the only person authorized to change a verified test result (see §40.149(c)). The MRO can do so with respect to a verification decision he or she has made, in the circumstances described in §40.149.
- o An arbitrator is someone who derives his authority from the employer, or from a labor-management agreement. The arbitrator cannot exercise authority that the employer could not exercise on its own. The arbitrator could not overturn a decision of the MRO concerning a test verification any more than the employer could on its own.
- o This prohibition applies to substantive decisions the MRO makes about the merits of a test (e.g., with respect to whether there is a legitimate medical explanation for a positive, adulterated, or substituted test result or whether a medical condition precluded an individual from providing a sufficient specimen).
- o An arbitrator could determine that a test result should be cancelled because of a defect in the drug testing process involving the MRO (e.g., that the MRO failed to afford the employee the opportunity for a verification interview). But an arbitrator could not overturn the substantive judgment of the MRO about whether, for example, the information submitted by the employee constituted a legitimate medical explanation.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #2

What is an employer to do if an arbitrator's decision claims to overturn the result of a DOT drug or alcohol test on grounds contrary to DOT regulations?

ANSWER:

- o There could be instances in which an arbitrator makes a decision that purports to cancel a DOT test for reasons that the DOT regulation does not recognize as valid.
- o For example, the arbitrator might make a decision based on disagreement with an MRO's judgment about a legitimate medical explanation (see §40.149) or on the basis of a procedural error that is not sufficient to cancel a test (see §40.209).
- o Such a test result remains valid under DOT regulations, notwithstanding the arbitrator's decision. Consequently, as a matter of Federal safety regulation, the employer must not return the employee to the performance of safety-sensitive functions until the employee has completed the return to duty process.
- o The employer may still be bound to implement the personnel policy outcome of the arbitrator's decision in such a case. This can result in hardship for the employer (e.g., being required to pay an individual at the same time as the Department's rules prevent the individual from performing the duties of his job).

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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§40.163

QUESTION #1:

Is it acceptable for an MRO to transmit a number of reports of drug test results per page to the employer, rather than one per page?

ANSWER:

- o The Department recommends that MROs use Copy 2 of the CCF as the means of reporting all drug test results to employers.
- o However, if you use a written report (all results) or an electronic report (negative results) meeting all the requirements of §40.163, rather than using Copy 2 of the CCF for this purpose, you must put only one such report on each page. This will help to prevent inadvertent breaches of confidentiality by the employer resulting from photocopying a multiple-result report and putting a copy in the file of each employee involved.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #2:

If the MRO uses a written report instead of a copy of the CCF to report results to employers, how should those reports be signed?

ANSWER:

- o The MRO must sign all reports of non-negative results (i.e., positives, refusals, tests canceled, and invalids).
- o The MRO or an MRO's staff member may rubber stamp and initial negative results. The rubber stamp should identify the MRO.
- o Each written report should be dated and indicate the address of the MRO.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

QUESTION #3:

May the MRO report an "interim" or "preliminary" test result to the employer (or C/TPA) while awaiting receipt of the MRO copy and/or the laboratory result?

ANSWER:

- o No. An MRO must not report tests results until and unless he or she has received all required information from the collection site and laboratory.
- o This means the MRO must have Copy 2 or a legible copy of Copy 2 (or any legible copy of a CCF page signed by the

employee) and must have the drug test result (sent in the appropriate manners for negatives and non-negatives) from the laboratory.

- o An MRO sending “in-progress” negative or non-negative results will be considered to be in violation of Part 40.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

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SPLIT SPECIMEN TESTING

§40.171

QUESTION #1:

Can someone other than the employee direct that an MRO have the employee’s split specimen tested?

ANSWER:

- o No. Because the split specimen exists to provide the employee with “due process” in the event that he or she desires to challenge the primary specimen’s results, only the employee can request that the split specimen be tested.
- o In addition, an employer or a union (or other labor representative) may not act on the behalf of the employee in requesting that the split specimen be tested.
- o The employee must make the request directly to the MRO.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

QUESTION #2:

Can a split specimen be sent to a second laboratory that is under the same corporate title as the primary laboratory?

ANSWER:

- o Yes. The rule requires the split to be tested at a different or second HHS-certified laboratory. For example, if the primary specimen was tested at XYZ Laboratory in Dallas, TX, the split specimen may be sent to XYZ Laboratory in Chicago, IL.
- o HHS certifies each laboratory separately and on its own merits. Laboratories on the HHS listing of certified laboratories, even those under the same corporate title, are individually certified and are considered separate and unique from one another.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

QUESTION #3:

Can the MRO require an employee’s split specimen test request to be in writing rather than verbal?

ANSWER:

- o §40.171(a) states that the employee’s request may be verbal or in writing. Therefore, the MRO must accept a verbal request.
- o The MRO may ask the employee for written documentation, but must immediately honor the verbal request.
- o An MRO should always document whether or not an employee requested to have the split tested.
- o The MRO must document the date and time of the employee’s request.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

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REFUSAL TO BE TESTED

§40.191

QUESTION #1:

What are some examples of an employee’s failure to cooperate with the testing process that would cause a refusal to test and how should the collector handle them?

ANSWER:

- o Part 40 highlights two examples of failure to cooperate – the employee refuses to empty pockets when instructed to do so; and the employee behaves in a confrontational way that disrupts the testing process.

- o Among others are:
 1. The employee fails to wash his or her hands after being directed to do so by the collector.
 2. The employee admits to the collector that he or she adulterated or substituted the specimen; and
 3. The employee is found to have a device – such as a prosthetic appliance – the purpose of which is to interfere with providing an actual urine specimen.
- o When the issue is a problem with refusing to following instructions – for example, refusing to empty pockets or refusing to wash hands – or if there is a confrontation, the collector should warn the employee of potential consequences of a failure to cooperate; and if practical, seek assistance from the DER or supervisor to ensure that the employee understands the ramifications.
- o When the issue is admission of adulteration or substitution or when a device is found, there is no need for the collector to warn the employee or to seek assistance from the DER or supervisor.
- o In every case, the collector must carefully follow the procedures at §40.191(d) by terminating the collection process, immediately notifying the DER of the refusal, and thoroughly documenting the circumstances surrounding the event in the remarks section of the CCF.
- o Any specimen that had been collected before the refusal should be discarded.

ODAPC Guidance, July 2006

QUESTION #2:

Do collectors sign the CCF in situations in which a urine specimen is not provided during a collection (i.e., a refusal to provide a specimen; a shy bladder situation)?

ANSWER:

- o In any such case, the collector would check the box in Step 2 of the CCF indicating that no specimen was provided and enter an explanatory remark.
- o The collector would then provide his or her name and signature in Step 4 of the CCF.
- o The employee’s name and phone number should be included on the MRO copy.
- o The collector would then transmit the CCF copies to the appropriate parties (e.g., employer, MRO).

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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ALCOHOL TESTING

§40.229

QUESTION #1:

Is an employer considered to be in compliance with Part 40 if EBTs are not available within 30 minutes of an alcohol screening test location?

ANSWER:

- o An employer is not considered to be in compliance if an EBT is not available for use within 30 minutes to confirm the screening test.
- o However, there may exist unusual circumstances (e.g., post-accident testing) in which an EBT is not available within the appropriate time frame. In such a case, the employer would not be considered out of compliance with the regulation if documentation exists showing a “good faith” effort to get an EBT. [It is important to note that most operating administrations give employers up to 8 hours to administer the appropriate alcohol test following a qualifying accident.]

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

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§40.275

QUESTION #1:

Is it acceptable to affix printed alcohol test results on the back of the Alcohol Testing Form (ATF) rather than on the front?

ANSWER:

- o §40.243(f) and §40.253(g) instruct the BAT to affix the printout of the information from the alcohol testing device to the designated space on the ATF.
- o The designated space on the ATF is on the front of the form. That is where BATs and STTs should affix the printouts.
- o However, because the instructions on the ATF also permit the printout to be affixed to the back of the ATF, the Department has no objections to having the printouts on the back of the ATF.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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SAP RETURN-TO-DUTY PROCESS

§40.281

QUESTION #1:

Because Part 40 requires collectors, MROs, BATs and STTs, and SAPs to maintain their own training records, can employers or training entities refuse to provide these service agents their training records?

ANSWER:

- o No. Employers and trainers who provide training for these service agents must not withhold training documentation from them when they have successfully completed the training requirements.
- o If a collector, BAT, STT, MRO, or SAP is not in possession of training documentation, he or she is in violation of Part 40.
- o Therefore, Part 40 does not permit the withholding of such documentation from these service agents.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

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§40.291

QUESTION #1:

Suppose the SAP fails to make the required recommendation for education and/or treatment of an employee who has violated a DOT agency drug or alcohol testing rule, and simply sends the employee back to the employer for a return-to-duty (RTD) test. What is the employer to do?

ANSWER:

- o The employer should not administer an RTD test under these circumstances.
- o The employer should refer the employee back to the SAP with direction to prescribe education and/or treatment and conduct a re-evaluation of the employee to determine whether the employee has successfully complied with the SAP's instructions.
- o If the employer has compounded the problem by having conducted the RTD test and returned the employee to safety-sensitive duties (i.e., only realizes that a mistake has been made some time after the fact), the employer should work with the SAP to "go back and do it right."
- o This means that the employee should be removed from performance of safety-sensitive functions, referred back to the SAP for an education and/or treatment prescription, and re-evaluated by the SAP for successful compliance. Following the receipt of a successful compliance report from the SAP, the

employer would conduct another RTD test before returning the employee to performance of safety-sensitive functions.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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§40.307

QUESTION #1:

May an employer conduct follow-up testing under company authority that goes beyond the follow-up testing which the SAP determines necessary?

ANSWER:

- o No. The regulation (at §40.307(d)(4)) and SAP guidelines state that employers must not impose additional testing requirements that go beyond the SAP's follow-up testing plan. This includes additional testing requirements under company authority.
- o In addition to follow-up testing and random testing, an employer has other means available to ascertain an employee's alcohol- and drug-free performance and functions.
 1. The employer can choose to monitor the employee's compliance with the SAP's recommendations for continuing treatment and/or education as part of a return-to-duty agreement with the employee.
 2. The employer can conduct reasonable suspicion testing if the employee exhibits signs and symptoms of drug or alcohol use.
 3. The employer can meet regularly with the employee to discuss the employee's continuing sobriety and drug-free status.
- o The Department is not opposed to an employer discussing his or her desires for having more than the minimum rule requirement (i.e., 6 tests in the first year) for follow-up testing with SAPs they intend to utilize.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

§40.311

QUESTION #1:

What is meant by "SAP's own letterhead?"

ANSWER:

- o By "SAP's own letterhead" we mean the letterhead the SAP uses in his or her daily counseling practice.
- o If the SAP is in private practice, the SAP should use the letterhead of his or her practice.
- o If the SAP works as an employee assistance professional for an organization, the SAP should use the employee assistance program's letterhead.
- o If the SAP works for a community mental health service, the SAP should use the community mental health service's letterhead.
- o The Department wants to avoid a SAP network provider requiring the SAP to use the provider's letterhead rather than that of the SAP.
- o The Department wants to avoid another service agent contracting the SAP's services to require the contracted SAP to use the service agent's letterhead.
- o The Department wants to avoid any appearance that anyone changed the SAP's recommendations or that the SAP's report failed to go directly from the SAP to the employer.
- o The Department does not want the SAP to use a "fill-in-the-blanks" / "check-the-appropriate-boxes" type of pre-printed form, including any that are issued to the SAP by a SAP network provider, to which the network or SAP would affix the SAP's letterhead information.
- o The SAP must generate and complete all information on the SAP report.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

CONFIDENTIALITY

§40.327

QUESTION #1:

If an MRO knows the identity of a physician responsible for determining whether a DOT-regulated employee is physically qualified to perform safety-sensitive duties (e.g., under Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulations for physical qualifications of motor carrier drivers) for another company, can the MRO report drug test result as well as medical information to that physician?

ANSWER:

- o Under §40.327(a), an MRO must report drug test results and medical information to third parties without the employee’s consent, under certain circumstances spelled out in the rule.
- o Under §40.327(b), a physician responsible for determining the medical qualifications of an employee under an applicable DOT agency safety regulation is a party to whom the MRO is instructed to provide this information.
- o Consequently, if an MRO knows the identity of such a physician – even if the physician performs this function for a different employer – the MRO would provide the information. The MRO is not required to affirmatively seek out such physicians, however.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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§40.329

QUESTION #1:

If an employee requests his/her records from the MRO, do these records include the MRO’s notes and comments or only copies of the CCF and laboratory result?

ANSWER:

- o In general, the MRO should provide all records that are available related to that employee, to include written notes, checklists, or comments. All of this information was obtained from the employee or from appropriate individuals or organizations (with the employee’s authorization) or from documentation provided by the employee.
- o Consistent with appropriate medical record constraints, the MRO may need to withhold or interpret sensitive medical, psychiatric, and mental health record information.

ODAPC Guidance, January 2002

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§40.333

QUESTION #1:

When records are stored and transferred electronically, how should they be made available to DOT representatives?

ANSWER:

- o The obligations of employers and service agents to make records available expeditiously to DOT representatives apply regardless of how the records are maintained.
- o All records must be easily and quickly accessible, legible, and formatted and stored in a well-organized and orderly way.
- o If electronic records do not meet these criteria, then the employer or service agent must convert them to printed documentation in a rapid and readily auditable way.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001

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§40.355(a)

QUESTION #1:

Are employers and their service agents in the Department of Transportation (DOT) drug and alcohol testing program required to obtain employee written authorizations in order to disclose drug and alcohol testing information?

ANSWER:

- o In the DOT drug and alcohol testing program, employers and service agents are not required to obtain written employee authorization to disclose drug and alcohol testing information where disclosing the information is required by 49 CFR Part 40 and other DOT Agency & U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) drug and alcohol testing regulations. 49 CFR Part 40 and DOT Agency & USCG regulations provide for confidentiality of individual test-related information in a variety of other circumstances.
- o Even if drug and alcohol testing information is viewed as protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) rules, it is not necessary to obtain employee written authorization where DOT requires the use or disclosure of otherwise protected health information under 49 CFR Part 40 or the other DOT Agency & USCG drug and alcohol testing regulations.
- o Unless otherwise stipulated by 49 CFR Part 40 or DOT Agency & USCG regulations, use or disclosure of the DOT drug and alcohol testing information without a consent or authorization from the employee is required by the Omnibus Transportation Employees Testing Act of 1991, 49 CFR Part 40, and DOT Agency & USCG drug and alcohol testing regulations.
- o Consequently, an employer or service agent in the DOT program may disclose the information without the written authorization from the employee under many circumstances.

For example:

1. Employers need no written authorizations from employees to conduct DOT tests.
2. Collectors need no written authorizations from employees to perform DOT urine collections, to distribute Federal Drug Testing Custody and Control Forms, or to send specimens to laboratories.
3. Screening Test Technicians and Breath Alcohol Technicians need no written authorizations from employees to perform DOT saliva or breath alcohol tests (as appropriate), or to report alcohol test results to employers.
4. Laboratories need no written authorizations from employees to perform DOT drug and validity testing, or to report test results to Medical Review Officers (MROs).
5. MROs need no written authorizations from employees to verify drug test results, to discuss alternative medical explanations with prescribing physicians and issuing pharmacists, to report results to employers, to confer with Substance Abuse Professionals (SAPs) and evaluating physicians, or to report other medical information (see §40.327).
6. SAPs need no written authorizations from employees to conduct SAP evaluations, to confer with employers, to confer with MROs, to confer with appropriate education and treatment providers, or to provide SAP reports to employers.
7. Consortia/Third Party Administrators need no written authorizations from employees to bill employers for service agent functions that they perform for employers or contract on behalf of employers.
8. Evaluating physicians need no written authorizations from employees to report evaluation information and results to MROs or to employers, as appropriate.

9. Employers and service agents need no written authorizations from employees to release information to requesting Federal, state, or local safety agencies with regulatory authority over them or employees.

ODAPC Guidance, July 2006

GENERAL ISSUES

Pre-Employment Alcohol Testing

QUESTION #1:

Can an employer wishing to conduct pre-employment alcohol testing, do so?

ANSWER:

- o A DOT-regulated employer (except under USCG and RSPA rules) wishing to conduct pre-employment alcohol testing under DOT authority may do so if certain conditions are met.
- o The testing must be accomplished for all applicants (i.e., the employer cannot select for testing some applicants and not others) and the testing must be conducted as a post-offer requirement (i.e., the employer needs to inform the applicant that he or she has the job if he or she passes a DOT alcohol test).
- o In addition, the testing and its consequences must comply with requirements of Part 40.

ODAPC Guidance, September 2001