Drug & Alcohol Testing Definitions

What's the difference between an alcohol screening test and a confirmation test?
The screening test is the initial alcohol test. A confirmation test is only performed if the screening test shows an alcohol concentration of .02 or higher. Only breath or saliva can be tested, not urine, blood, or any other substance.

What is a Consortium/Third-Party Administrator (C/TPA)?
A Consortium/Third-Party Administrator (C/TPA) means a service agent that provides or coordinates one or more drug and/or alcohol testing services for Department of Transportation (DOT)-regulated employers.

C/TPAs typically provide or coordinate the provision of a number of such services. C/TPAs perform administrative tasks concerning the operation of employers’ drug and alcohol testing programs. This term (C/TPA) includes, but is not limited to, groups of employers who join together to administer, as a single entity, the DOT drug and alcohol testing programs of its members.

What is a Designated Employer Representative (DER)?
The Designated Employer Representative, or DER, is an employee authorized to take immediate action to remove employees from (or have them removed from) safety-sensitive duties and to make required decisions in the testing and evaluation processes. The DER also receives test results and other communications for the employer. Only an employee (or the employer directly) may act as a DER. This is one of the only roles that a service agent can never perform.

What is a licensed medical practitioner?
Licensed medical practitioner is a person who is licensed, certified, and/or registered, in accordance with applicable federal, state, local, or foreign laws and regulations, to prescribe controlled substances and other drugs.

Only a licensed medical practitioner is allowed to issue a prescription of a controlled substance to a driver according to the FMCSRs.

What is a Medical Review Officer (MRO)?
A medical review officer (MRO) is defined as "a person who is a licensed physician (Doctor of Medicine or Osteopathy) and who is responsible for receiving and reviewing laboratory results generated by an employer's drug testing program and evaluating medical explanations for certain drug test results."

The MRO acts as an independent and impartial "gatekeeper." He/she is an advocate for the accuracy and integrity of the drug testing process.

What is a non-DOT test?
A non-DOT test is referring to any drug or alcohol test that is not required under the DOT regulations, especially Part 382. For example, some companies perform an annual drug test on all drivers. This is a non-DOT test, because the DOT does not require an annual test. Any tests conducted under the motor carrier’s authority rather than the DOT’s must be performed using a non-DOT testing form (forensic).
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What is a service agent?
A service agent is any person or entity, other than an employee of the employer, who provides services specified under this part to employers and/or employees in connection with DOT drug and alcohol testing requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, collectors, BATs and STTs, laboratories, MROs, substance abuse professionals, and C/TPAs.

Service agents can provide a variety of services, including random selections, breath alcohol testing, evaluations, etc. The roles and responsibilities of service agents are described in Subpart Q. The motor carrier is responsible for Part 40 compliance even if it uses a service agent.

What is a Substance Abuse Professional (SAP)?
A substance abuse professional (SAP) is defined as "a person who evaluates employees who have violated Department of Transportation (DOT) drug and alcohol regulations and makes recommendations concerning education, treatment, follow-up testing and aftercare."

What is Public Interest Exclusion (PIE)?
The purpose of the public interest exclusion (PIE) is to protect transportation employers and employees from serious noncompliance with DOT drug and alcohol testing rules by ensuring that employers conduct business only with responsible service agents.

The DOT uses PIEs to exclude any service agent from participating in its drug and alcohol testing program that by serious noncompliance has shown that it is not currently acting in a responsible manner. The DOT maintains a document called "List of Excluded Drug and Alcohol Service Agents" which lists those agents who cannot be used in DOT drug and alcohol programs. This document can be found at the DOT website.

What is validity testing?
Specimen validity testing is the evaluation of a specimen (provided for controlled substance testing) to determine if it is consistent with normal human urine. The purpose of validity testing is to determine whether:

1. Certain adulterants or foreign substances were added to the specimen;
2. The specimen was diluted; or
3. The specimen was substituted.