

# COMPETENCIES OF THE MRO



Medical Review Officer  
Certification Council

3231 S Halsted St, Ste Front #167, Chicago, IL 60608 | <https://www.mrocc.org> | [mrocc@mrocc.org](mailto:mrocc@mrocc.org) | 847-631-0599

---

## **MROCC COMPETENCIES OF THE MEDICAL REVIEW OFFICER (MRO)**

The Medical Review Officer operates in a multidisciplinary environment in which skills and knowledge of a variety of subject areas relating to drug and alcohol testing are required. For the purpose of the MROCC certification examination, the subject areas are divided as Substance Use Disorders, Regulatory Issues and MRO Role, Toxicology, Pharmacology and Laboratory Issues, Clinical Aspects, and Collections and Procedures.

### **I SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS (5%)**

#### COMPETENCY STATEMENT:

Although the skills of the MRO may be quite different from those of the addiction medicine specialist, the MRO must be knowledgeable about and have clinical experience in the field of substance use disorders. MROs may be called upon to be a general resource for substance use issues. General knowledge in the area of addictive disorders will enable the MRO to:

- recognize the public health implications of inappropriate substance use.
- recognize the clinical and behavioral signs of substance use disorders.
- recognize problems of prescription drug use, misuse and overuse, including the use of opioids and non-DOT regulated prescription drugs.
- describe the natural history and epidemiology of substance use disorders.
- interact effectively with assessment and treatment professionals in the management of individuals identified with alcohol and/or substance use disorders, and workplace prevention and control programs for inappropriate substance use.
- serve as a resource to the employer on issues of aftercare monitoring, return-to-work and medical qualifications for the performance of safety sensitive tasks.

### **II. REGULATORY ISSUES AND MRO ROLE (50%)**

#### COMPETENCY STATEMENT:

The MRO must be and remain knowledgeable about HHS Mandatory Guidelines, and DOT and DOT Agency regulations which impact organizations for whom the MRO evaluates drug test results. The MRO is often called upon to assist clients in the implementation of legally defensible policies and programs. Therefore, the MRO must be able to advise organizations about both regulated and non-regulated drug and alcohol testing procedures. Knowledge in the area of regulatory issues and MRO responsibilities will enable the MRO to:

- interact effectively with other program participants, including employees, employers, DERs, SAPs, TPAs, prescribing physicians, other health care workers, laboratories and collection sites.
- advise employers in the development and implementation of effective workplace substance misuse prevention program policies and procedures in both regulated and private sector settings.
- comply with applicable laws and federal regulations in the review, interpretation and reporting of drug test results, including confidentiality, documentation, record maintenance and storage, and release of information.

- develop a standard operating procedure for conducting an effective MRO interview which complies with applicable regulations.
- recognize and address the major legal and regulatory issues that face the MRO, other service providers and employers in the establishment and implementation of drug testing programs.
- serve as an expert consultant or witness on matters involving drug testing.
- adhere to and uphold the professional code of ethics relating to drug testing.
- evaluate and help manage collector services, laboratory services, and other services in the program to ensure reliability, confidentiality, efficiency, appropriateness, and promptness of these services in response to the employer's needs.

### **III. TOXICOLOGY, PHARMACOLOGY AND LABORATORY ISSUES (20%)**

#### COMPETENCY STATEMENT:

The MRO must be knowledgeable of the toxicology and pharmacology of frequently misused substances. While the MRO is not a laboratory director, the MRO must know what goes on in the laboratory and how quality is assured. Knowledge in these areas will enable the MRO to:

- recognize and describe the pharmaco/toxicokinetics of drugs (both regulated and non-DOT regulated) and alcohol.
- recognize both trade names and generic names for substances that are likely to appear in a DOT or non-DOT drug screen, interfere with a drug test, or be presented to the MRO as a donor explanation for a positive drug test.
- recognize the appropriate analytical methods for drug and alcohol screening and confirmation, and properly interpret results, with consideration of limits of detection, sensitivity, specificity, limitations, interferences, cost and availability.
- advise clients regarding the use of various matrices and technologies for drug testing.
- provide consultation to clients regarding testing for substances of abuse including both regulated and non-DOT regulated drugs, including prescription substances, non-prescription substances, cotinine (nicotine) and alcohol.
- describe laboratory QA, QC, and certification requirements to an employer or other interested party.
- efficiently transmit and receive drug test data and information while maintaining donor confidentiality.
- evaluate laboratory findings relating to specimen validity.

### **IV. CLINICAL ASPECTS (10%)**

#### COMPETENCY STATEMENT:

The MRO must be familiar with clinical issues related to drug and alcohol use and testing, including medical explanations for non-negative tests and medical qualifications for performance safety sensitive tasks. Knowledge in these clinical areas will enable the MRO to:

- recognize clinical evidence of drug misuse.
- evaluate alternative medical explanations for laboratory drug test results (including positive, substituted, adulterated, invalid and dilute specimens).
- evaluate the inability to produce a specimen.
- recognize and appropriately respond to conditions which may render an individual unfit and/or unqualified for duty, including: (1) unauthorized drug use, (2) authorized prescription or over-the-counter drug use, (3) substance use disorders, and (4) illness.

### **V. COLLECTIONS AND PROCEDURES (15%)**

#### COMPETENCY STATEMENT:

Although MROs do not routinely collect specimens, they must thoroughly understand collection procedures and chain of custody issues, as well as correctable and fatal flaws. Knowledge in the area of collections and procedures will enable MROs to:

- describe and apply appropriate procedures for specimen collections, including observed and unobserved, split specimen, insufficient quantity collections, and urine testing, oral fluid testing, hair testing, blood testing, sweat testing, etc.
- describe and apply appropriate procedures for the use of custody and control forms.

- identify and address procedural errors.
- describe and apply appropriate procedures for alcohol testing.
- serve as a consultant to BATs, STTs and employers on alcohol testing procedures.