

# DOT SAP Return-to-Duty Checklist

A Comprehensive Guide for Truck Drivers



## 1 Choose Your SAP Counselor (Substance Abuse Professional)

The foundation of your return-to-duty process begins with selecting a qualified Substance Abuse Professional. This decision is critical and should not be taken lightly, as changing SAPs later in the process is extremely difficult and can cause significant delays.

(877) 724-5965

**Action Items:** [DriveLineCompliance.com](#)

- ☐ **Select a Qualified DOT SAP:**
  - Choose a DOT-qualified Substance Abuse Professional from verified directories
  - Verify credentials through the FMCSA Clearinghouse or other official sources
  - Ensure the SAP has current DOT qualification training and proper licensing

- ☐ **Verify SAP Credentials:**
  - Confirm your chosen SAP is properly licensed/certified
  - Check that they have current DOT qualification training
  - Recommended resource: <https://www.saplist.com/find-a-sap/>

**Warning:** Selecting an unqualified SAP will invalidate your entire process

- ☐ **Contact and Designate Your SAP:**
  - Establish a professional relationship with your chosen SAP
  - Log into the FMCSA Clearinghouse
  - Designate your SAP by entering their name and sending a designation request

- ☐ **Documentation:**
  - Save your SAP Counselor's contact information
  - Keep records of all communications
  - Store credentials verification for your records

## 2 SAP Accepts Designation & You are Ready to Schedule Your Meeting

Once you have designated your SAP, the next phase involves their official acceptance and preparation for your initial evaluation. This step requires careful coordination and financial preparation.

**Action Items:**

- ☐ **SAP Acceptance Process:**
  - Monitor the Clearinghouse for your SAP's acceptance of the designation request

**Critical Warning:** Once accepted, changing SAPs requires calling the FMCSA Clearinghouse directly and going through a complex process that can significantly delay your return to work. Choose your SAP wisely before sending the designation request.

- ☐ **Financial Preparation:**
  - Arrange payment for your initial SAP evaluation
  - Understand that most SAP services are not covered by insurance
  - Payment responsibility is typically determined by employer-employee agreements or existing management-labor agreements
  - Budget for both evaluation costs and potential treatment costs

- ☐ **Scheduling Your Evaluation:**
  - Contact your SAP directly to schedule your initial evaluation appointment
  - Allow approximately one hour for the session
  - Confirm whether the session will be conducted in-person or via telehealth/video call
  - Ensure you have a quiet, private space if conducting the evaluation remotely

- ☐ **Additional Resources:**
  - Consider dependable counselors at: <https://drivelinecompliance.com/sap-counselors>

## 3 Initial SAP Evaluation (Assessment Meeting)

The initial SAP evaluation is a comprehensive assessment that determines your treatment needs. This step is crucial for establishing the foundation of your recovery and return-to-duty plan.

**Action Items:**

- ☐ **Attend Your Initial Evaluation:**
  - Arrive on time and prepared for a thorough assessment
  - Allow at least one hour for the session
  - If conducted remotely, ensure clear audio and visual interaction capabilities
  - Be in a quiet, private area where you can speak openly

- ☐ **Assessment Requirements:**
  - The assessment may be performed face-to-face or remotely at the SAP's discretion
  - Technology used must meet specific criteria for real-time audio and visual interaction
  - SAP must not be prohibited from using technology within their state licensing requirements

- ☐ **Prepare for Discussion Topics:**
  - Your specific violation and circumstances
  - Complete drug and alcohol use history
  - Employment history and work environment factors
  - Family history and support systems
  - Any previous treatment or counseling experiences
  - Current life circumstances and stressors

- ☐ **Begin Prescribed Treatment:**
  - The SAP will determine what assistance you need to resolve problems associated with alcohol and/or drug use
  - You must successfully complete whatever education and/or treatment program your SAP recommends
  - Treatment costs are separate from SAP evaluation costs and are your responsibility
  - Begin treatment promptly to avoid delays in the process

- ☐ **Post-Evaluation Requirements:**
  - Complete all SAP recommendations fully and successfully
  - Maintain documentation of your progress
  - Prepare for re-evaluation to determine compliance

## 4 SAP Determines Eligibility for Return-to-Duty Testing

Upon successful completion of your prescribed treatment, your SAP will conduct a follow-up evaluation to determine your eligibility for return-to-duty testing. This is a critical milestone in your journey back to safety-sensitive duties.

**Action Items:**

- ☐ **Attend Follow-Up Evaluation:**
  - Schedule and attend your follow-up evaluation with your SAP
  - Bring documentation of completed treatment/education programs
  - Be prepared to demonstrate compliance with all initial recommendations

- ☐ **Eligibility Determination Process:**
  - Your SAP will assess whether you have successfully demonstrated compliance
  - If successful, the SAP determines you are eligible for return-to-duty testing
  - The SAP must report this determination to the Clearinghouse by the close of business the following day
  - Your status will be updated to "Driver Determined Eligible for RTD Test"

- ☐ **Confirmation and Documentation:**
  - Confirm with your counselor that they have updated your Clearinghouse status
  - Request and receive the SAP's written report documenting your successful compliance
  - This report serves as proof of completion for current and future employers
  - If you have no current employer or change jobs, the SAP must provide this report directly to you

- ☐ **Follow-Up Testing Plan Coordination:**
  - Understand that drivers cannot see their Follow-Up Testing plan directly in the Clearinghouse
  - You can ask your counselor to share the plan with a C/TPA (Consortium/Third-Party Administrator)
  - This allows the C/TPA to share it with future employers on your behalf
  - Consider services like DriveLine for plan coordination and sharing

## 5 Return-to-Duty Drug Test

This is the pivotal step that officially clears you to resume safety-sensitive duties. The return-to-duty test must be passed with a negative result before you can perform any safety-sensitive functions.

**Action Items:**

- ☐ **Arrange Testing Through Employer or C/TPA:**
  - Work with your current or prospective employer to schedule the return-to-duty (RTD) drug test
  - If you don't have a current or prospective employer, register as an owner-operator
  - Designate a C/TPA (such as DriveLine) to order the RTD test for you

**Critical:** You cannot perform safety-sensitive functions until you pass this test with a negative result

- ☐ **Understand Testing Requirements:**
  - The return-to-duty test must be conducted under direct observation (49 CFR 40.67(b))
  - This is different from regular drug tests - direct observation is mandatory
  - If applying for a new job, a single test can serve as both pre-employment and return-to-duty if properly characterized as an RTD test and observed

- ☐ **Test Administration and Results:**
  - Take the observed RTD test as scheduled
  - If your RTD test is negative, your employer or C/TPA must report the negative result to the Clearinghouse
  - Once reported, your status changes from "prohibited" to "not prohibited"
  - You are officially cleared to return to safety-sensitive duties

**Warning:** If you fail the test, you will start the entire SAP process over again and will have another violation in the Clearinghouse

- ☐ **Documentation and Record Keeping:**
  - Save your Carrier or C/TPA's information for future reference
  - Keep copies of test results for your records
  - If using DriveLine for testing, they will send you results upon request
  - Maintain these records to prove correct completion if your carrier is audited

## 6 Complete Follow-Up Testing Plan

The final stage involves adhering to a comprehensive follow-up testing regimen prescribed by your SAP. This ongoing monitoring ensures sustained compliance and safety.

**Action Items:**

- ☐ **Understand Your Follow-Up Testing Plan:**
  - Your SAP has prescribed a specific follow-up testing plan that your employer must implement
  - Minimum requirement: 6 unannounced follow-up tests during the first 12 months
  - All follow-up tests must be conducted under direct observation
  - The SAP can extend testing for up to 60 months (5 years) total
  - Follow-up testing is in addition to other DOT-required tests (random, post-accident, etc.)

- ☐ **Employer Transition Considerations:**
  - If you change employers before completing your follow-up testing plan, your new employer must continue the testing plan where the previous employer left off
  - Your new employer must obtain your follow-up testing plan from your previous employer (§ 40.307)
  - Alternative: If you have stored your plan with Track My SAP under DriveLine Solutions, they can share the follow-up plan for you


- ☐ **Complete the Full Testing Plan:**
  - Comply with all scheduled and unannounced follow-up tests
  - Your employer (or assigned C/TPA) must report successful completion to the Clearinghouse
  - Once completed and reported, this information will be retained in the Clearinghouse for five years from the violation date


- ☐ **Record Keeping and Final Steps:**
  - Track your tests taken for your records
  - Keep copies of Chain of Custody (COC) Forms from each test
  - Obtain copies of test results from your carrier or C/TPA when possible
  - Important: You must request removal of information from the Clearinghouse after the 5-year mark; it will not be removed automatically
  - Mark your calendar with a reminder five years from the violation date to call the Clearinghouse

## 7 Important Reminders

**Time Sensitivity:** Each step must be completed in sequence. Delays at any stage can significantly impact your return to work timeline.

**Financial Responsibility:** Most SAP services and treatment programs are not covered by insurance. Budget accordingly.

 **Documentation:** Keep detailed records of all communications, test results, and completion certificates throughout the process.

 **Compliance:** Full compliance with all SAP recommendations and testing requirements is mandatory for successful completion.

 This checklist is based on DOT regulations and SAP requirements. Always consult with your SAP counselor and legal advisors for specific guidance related to your situation.