

Chemical Dependency and Impaired Nursing Practice

**Provided by the Wisconsin Nurses Association
Peer Assistance Advisory Council**

**6117 Monona Drive, Suite 1, Madison, WI
53716 info@wisconsin**



Purpose of Presentation

The purpose of this presentation is to assist the learner in:

1. Relay information about impaired nursing practice.
2. Identify legal responsibilities in reporting an impaired practitioner
3. List ways to offer support to a nurse in recovery.
4. Identify the role of the Wisconsin Nurses Association in supporting nurses in recovery.

Chemical Dependency and Impaired Practice

The Nurses Obligation to the Profession and the Public

- **To LEARN**
- **To HELP each other**
- **To REPORT impaired practice to someone**
 - **Supervisor FIRST**
 - **WI State Board of Nursing - ONLY if nurse refuses to be helped**

Purpose of Wisconsin Nurses Association Peer Assistance Program

- * To serve as a resource for nurses with questions about alcohol and drug use.
- * To provide support and advocacy for nurses from a volunteer assigned to the nurse in need



Purpose of Wisconsin Nurses Association Peer Assistance Program

- * To educate health care workers and consumers about the PAP programs
- * To educate nurses and nurse employers about chemical abuse/dependency among nurses



What is chemical dependency?

- * A primary disease process characterized by three traits:
 - Compulsion
 - Loss of control
 - Continued use in spite of adverse consequences.
- * Chemical dependency is chronic, progressive, and treatable. Not a curable disease. Fatal if not interrupted.

What is impaired practice?

- * Nursing practice is impaired when the individual is unable to meet the requirements of the code of ethics and standards because cognitive, interpersonal, or psychomotor skills are affected by conditions of the individual in interaction with the environment.
- * These factors include psychiatric illness, excessive alcohol or drug use, or addiction.



Do we have to report impaired practice if we suspect it?

YES - WNA Peer Assistance Program encourages the reporting of suspected impaired practice to the employee's supervisor

Chapter N7 of Nurse Practice Act

- A RN or LPN has a duty to report either to institutional supervisory personnel OR the Board of Nursing any violation of the rules of conduct. This includes knowledge of impaired practice.
- The Board bears the legal responsibility to the public and enforcing the Nurses Practice Act

How many nurses are impaired?



- * The number of chemically dependent nurses in the United States is unknown.
- * The American Nurses Association estimates that about 6-8% of the RN population has a drug or alcohol related problem.
- * 11 % chemically dependent on drugs and 10 % dependent on alcohol. It is estimated that 546,000 of the 2.6 million RNs in the United States abuse either drugs or alcohol.

What should we look for?



What should we do if a problem is suspected?

- * Try to stop enabling
- * Document specific objective observations
- * Talk to the nurse's supervisor
- * Assist with an intervention
- * Inform the nurse about WNA's Peer Assistance Program and services
- * Support the nurse in treatment and return to work

How does WNA's Peer Assistance Program work?

- *Whoever wants services may call 800-362-3959 or email info@wisconsinnurses.org
- * A nurse wanting one-on-one support is assigned a volunteer who calls ASAP.
- * Education for the supervisor or co-workers will be provided by the WNA office or by a volunteer.



How does WNA's Peer Assistance Program work?

- * WNA Peer Assistance Program volunteers may call your institution asking for time to educate health care workers about the PAP programs and the disease.



When should the Board of Nursing get involved?

ONLY when the Nurse does not follow the guidelines set by the employer for help in recovery.





It is the worst of plagues. It knows no season, no boundaries, no microbe isolated, no vaccine invested to end its reign. It is a pestilence with all the classic trappings of social disruption, suffering and death - and on terrible, defining difference: we invite it to kill, maim, and diminish us. And because its vector is pleasure and its mask is time, we have not even recognized its horror fully enough to grant it a name worthy of its grisly power. Is it inadequate to call this filler of graves and plunderer of nations by so pallid a name as Substance Abuse.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Helping a Colleague: Six Key Steps

1. Convey a message of genuine hope

- After many losses, fear of job, friends, earning power feels hopeless
- Need to convince her/him that recovery is possible

2. Enlist the help of a recovering nurse

- Seeing someone who has “been there” offers hope and empathy.

3. Make sure the intervention team has been trained to deal with the situation

Chemically dependent nurse's thought process is altered. Those in the room can't also be confused !!

All must understand the disease and the power of denial.

They must lead the nurse past her own denial to a realization of the problem.



4. Plan the intervention well

- Never one-on-one Use a team, peer, supervisor, nurse administration representative. Two people to get the nurse to a treatment facility, and someone from a peer assistance intervention or advocacy program to guard the rights.

- Meet to plan the intervention: when & where, who delivers opening statement, who arranges bed in treatment center, who checks nurse's insurance

5. Reassure the nurse that her job will be waiting for her when she has successfully completed treatment.

- Help her retain her insurance to pay for treatment
- Save a valuable NURSE
- Assuring her that she can return to her job is often a factor that gets her to treatment.

6. Use power and authority carefully

- If confronted nurse continues to deny, proceed carefully through the sequence of possible alternatives.
- First suspension or termination
- Next discuss reporting to Board of Nursing - license in jeopardy
- Next that the hospital may report the incidents of narcotics diversion to the law enforcement agencies
- Present in sequence, giving ample time for nurse to think about each, use criminal threat only as last resort

For More Information

Contact the Wisconsin Nurses Association
1-800-362-3959 or info@wisconsinnurses.org

