

Indiana State University
School of Nursing
Doctor of Nursing Practice Program
Master of Science in Nursing Program

Chemically Impaired Nursing Student

Purpose: To address the chemically impaired student nurse who is in need of treatment for chemical dependency, alcohol use or substance misuse/abuse. If the student is licensed as a registered nurse or a practical nurse, in addition to enforcement of this policy, a report will be filed after the confirmed incident to the appropriate state nursing authorities.

Philosophy: Chemical dependency is a disease that is preventable and treatable. The need for public safety and treatment is also recognized as an ethical and professional obligation. The nursing faculty requires that students provide competent care. To fulfill this obligation, nursing students must be free of chemical impairment during all parts of the nursing program including classroom, campus laboratory, and all clinical settings.

The nursing faculty defines the chemically impaired student as a person who, while in the academic or clinical setting, is under the influence of, or has abused, either separately or in combination: alcohol, over-the-counter medications, illegal drugs, prescribed medications, inhalants, or synthetic designer drugs. Abuse of the substance includes episodic misuse or chronic use that has produced psychological and/or physical symptomology.

Procedure:

1. If the preceptor suspects that a student is currently impaired by chemicals, the preceptor should remove the student to a private area and immediately contact the lead course faculty. The preceptor should state the sign(s) and behavior(s) observed and allow the student to provide a brief verbal explanation. Observable unusual behaviors include, but are not limited to: slurred speech, impaired motor abilities, changes in attitude, changes in personality, scent of alcohol or other chemical, frequent absenteeism, not meeting obligations, and other aberrant behaviors. Question the student regarding the use of any substance and if used, what, when, and how much was used and by what route it was taken. If in a clinical facility, the preceptor must also act in accordance with the agency policies and procedures.
2. The student will be directed immediately to leave the clinical setting, and the faculty will document the incident on an [incident report form](#) that will be submitted to the Program Coordinator, Associate Director for Students, and the Executive Director of Nursing. Transportation may need to be arranged at the student's expense. Preceptors are not permitted to transport any student in personal cars.
3. The student must submit to and pay for a breath alcohol test and 10-panel drug screen and confirmatory testing (if needed) at a facility approved by the preceptor immediately and no later than two hours following the incident.
4. The results of the breath alcohol test and 10-panel drug screen and/or completion of confirmatory testing should be submitted from the testing agency to Program Coordinator and Associate Director for Students within 24 hours of completion. Results will also be shared with the appropriate state board of nursing which could

- therein effect license status. Any change in license status must be reported immediately to the Program Coordinator and the Associate Director for Students.
5. In the event of negative drug or alcohol screening results, further follow-up will be required with preceptor and course faculty to identify issues that led to student behavior. This follow-up must occur prior to returning to any clinical setting.
 6. In the event of positive drug screening or breath alcohol testing results, the faculty are professionally and ethically committed to supporting the welfare of the chemically impaired nursing student and protecting the public. The student must be evaluated by a state certified substance abuse counselor before returning to the nursing program (available at the ISU Student Counseling Center or through state board of nursing). The student is responsible for any costs related to screening, evaluation, and, if required, any further counseling. A written verification from the state certified substance abuse counselor that the student is safe to return to student nursing practice is required before the student may resume his or her program of study.
 7. In the event of failure of the student to undergo drug screening and breath alcohol testing within the designated timeline and/or failure to seek evaluation and treatment, or if an additional incident occurs related to chemical impairment, the Chairperson of the program will initiate dismissal from the program. The following conditions apply:
 - a. The student will not be eligible to reapply to the program for a minimum of five years.
 - b. If reapplying after five years, all application procedures and policies will apply, including submission of negative 10 panel drug screen and breath alcohol test.
 - c. If successfully re-admitted, the student will restart the program from the beginning.
 - d. The student has a right to due process through the University student judicial system.
 8. If inpatient or residential treatment is chosen by the student, the student, his or her academic advisor, and the Program Coordinator will determine the best action to be taken in regards to stopping out, dropping, or withdrawing from nursing course(s). The Admission, Progression, Retention, Dismissal, and Graduation Policy will be adhered to if the student must drop nursing courses due to treatment regime.