Policy Statement Division of Nursing: Chemical Abuse and Impairment Policy for Nursing Students

Policy Number: S - 11

Scope

Indiana University (IU) School of Nursing (SON) at Indiana University-Purdue University Columbus (IUSON at IUPUC) students.

Policy Statement

IUSON at IUPUC is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and productive academic environment for its students, faculty, and staff, as well as providing a safe clinical setting for students, clients, and employees of affiliated agencies. The IUSON at IUPUC goal for maintaining a drug free workplace and academic environments is in compliance with the federal Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988, and in accordance with the IUSON at IUPUC Undergraduate Nursing School Handbook and the Indiana University Code of Student Conduct. Therefore students must remain free from the use, sale, distribution or possession of any illegal drug and must also remain free of impairment related to the use of drugs or alcohol.

For obvious health and safety concerns, all students enrolled in programs offered by the Division of Nursing must participate in clinical education activities in full control of their manual
dexterity and skills, mental faculties, and judgement. The presence of alcohol and or drugs, lawfully prescribed or otherwise, or a profound lack of sleep, which interfere with the student’s judgement or motor coordination in a healthcare setting poses an unacceptable risk to clients, faculty, other students, the university, and clinical partners (i.e. hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, clinics, health systems, and other healthcare organizations involved with student education and to which the university has a clinical affiliation agreement in place). To ensure client safety, and comply with clinical agency policies, the Division of Nursing has adopted a chemical substance abuse and impairment testing policy.

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**Reason for Policy**

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that all students are able to provide safe patient care with intact mental and physical faculties in compliance with clinical agency and IUPUC chemical substance abuse and impairment guidelines.

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**Definitions**

1) **Nursing student:** Any fulltime or part-time student admitted to the Division of Nursing. This includes all degree tracks.

2) **Chemical substance abuse:** The use of illegal/non-prescribed substances, prescribed substances, or alcohol that impairs performance when engaging in any learning activity including classes, laboratory, and/or delivery of client care in a clinical setting.

3) **Sleep deprivation impairment:** Sleep deprivation occurs whenever an individual does not get enough sleep. It is an impairment when the lack of sleep interferes with any learning activity such as classes, laboratory, and/or delivery of client care in the clinical setting.

4) **Pre-clinical testing:** Chemical substance abuse testing conducted on all students prior to engaging in a clinical experience and/or providing care to clients in any clinical setting affiliated with our clinical partners.

5) **Reasonable Suspicion Testing:** Chemical substance abuse testing conducted on a student because individualized and objective evidence exists to support the conclusion that a student has either 1) engaged in the use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs in violation of applicable policies, laws, and regulations; or 2) appears to be impaired. Facts that could give rise to reasonable suspicion include, without limitation: observed possession of illegal drugs or alcohol; the odor of alcohol or drugs; impaired behavior such as slurred speech; decreased motor coordination; difficulty in maintaining balance; marked changes in personality or academic performance or behavior; reports of observed drug or alcohol use; an arrest or conviction for a drug or alcohol related offense; positive drug test; or newly discovered evidence of drug test tampering.

6) **Impaired:** A person’s mental or physical capabilities are reduced below their normal levels...
An impaired student, who by virtue of his/her use of alcohol, illegal or prescribed pharmaceutical agents, or lack of sleep, exhibits deteriorated motor/psychomotor function, reduced conceptual/integrative/synthetic thought processes, and/or diminished cognition, judgment, and attentiveness compared to previous observations of the student’s conduct and performance. For purposes of this policy, the term impaired shall also mean addiction and/or physical or mental dependence upon alcohol as well as legal or illegal pharmaceuticals.

7) **Illegal pharmaceutical:** For the purposes of this policy, illegal pharmaceuticals are defined as follows:

- any drug not legally obtained
- any drug which could be legally obtained but has not been legally obtained
- any prescribed medication not being used for its intended purpose, in the prescribed dosage and manner, or by the person for whom it was prescribed
- any over-the-counter medication or substance being used at a dosage other than the recommended dosage, or being used for a purpose other than intended by the manufacturer
- any drug be used in a manner that is not consistent with established medical practice standards
- Specific drugs screened for abuse include: alcohol, amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine, marijuana (THC), methadone, methamphetamines, opiates, oxycodone, phencyclidine (PCP).

8) **Permissible drug use:** refer to the prescription drugs prescribed to a student by an appropriate health care provider information in the consequences for permissible drug use section of this policy.

9) **Sleep deprivation:** For the purposes of this policy, sleep deprivation is defined as

- Excessive sleepiness or fatigue related to lack of appropriate sleep
- Inability to or difficulty in staying awake due to lack of sleep
- Delayed cognition related to lack of adequate sleep

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**Procedures**

1). Agreement to Submit to Chemical Substance Abuse Testing

A. A student participating in a Division of Nursing degree track must agree to submit to preclinical testing and reasonable suspicion testing when circumstances warrant such testing. The student shall sign an acknowledgement and consent form that evidences the students consent to:

- Comply with the Division of Nursing policies pertaining to alcohol and pharmaceuticals
• Comply with all policies and regulations of affiliated clinical partners pertaining to alcohol and pharmaceuticals
• Submit to pre-clinical testing, reasonable suspicion testing under this policy, and in the event an affiliated clinical partner requires random drug testing pursuant to its policies, to submit to random drug testing
• Authorize disclosure of drug testing results to the Chair of the Division of Nursing
• The Division of Nursing will maintain the signed acknowledgement and consent to chemical substance screening as part of their student file. Refusal to sign the document or provide consent shall be grounds for non-placement in clinical experiences with subsequent dismissal from the nursing program. A clear chemical substance screen is required to begin or continue in the nursing program. If the student leaves the program for any reason, including being out of sequence, a new chemical substance screen will be required before readmission to any classes.

2). Pre-Clinical Substance Screening

A. Students will be notified about the chemical substance screening in their admission letter
B. Students in all nursing degree tracks will be required to complete a pre-clinical chemical substance screening prior to enrolling in the first clinical course.
C. Pre-clinical substance testing will be coordinated with the student’s advisor as part of their preadmission screening information, and will be conducted by a qualified vendor approved by the university. The cost of the drug testing will be borne by the student. The student shall be provided with a list of drugs for testing as required by the Division of Nursing and/or our clinical partners.
D. Positive pre-clinical chemical substance tests will be confirmed by a second screen from the original sample.
E. The chair of the Division of Nursing will notify the student of a confirmed positive substance screen.
F. A student having a confirmed positive chemical substance screen will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the nursing program, in accordance with established Division of Nursing disciplinary policies and procedures.

3). Reasonable Suspicion Chemical Substance Abuse Screening

A. Reasonable suspicion substance screening may be conducted when individualized and objective evidence exists to support the conclusion that a student (1) has engaged in the use of alcohol or pharmaceuticals in violation of applicable policies, laws, and regulations; or (2) appears to be impaired.
B. Evidence of a student’s use of alcohol or pharmaceuticals or impairment may be provided to any Division of Nursing faculty member by any individual, including employees of an affiliated clinical partner.
C. When individualized reasonable suspicion is found to exist, the faculty member begins the documentation processes by completing an incident report.
D. Once reasonable suspicion is determined by a faculty member and the student
has been confronted by the faculty member who documents the suspected conduct, the student will be removed from the learning environment. The faculty member shall notify the chair of the Division of Nursing, or, in the absence of the chair, a designee, and submit the incident report to the chair or designee.

E. The faculty member making the report will coordinate the screening procedure with the Division of Nursing chair, or designee. Determination of whether drug testing is warranted under the facts and circumstances shall be made by the chair or designee of the Division of Nursing and general counsel. Upon determination, the student shall receive a notice that chemical substance abuse screening is needed. The student shall bear the cost of the testing, and no advanced warning for testing is required.

F. The student shall be provided with a list of drugs for testing as required by the Division of Nursing and/or the clinical partner.

G. Positive reasonable suspicion chemical substance abuse screenings will be confirmed by a second screen of the original sample.

H. The chair of the Division of Nursing will notify a student of a confirmed positive chemical substance screen.

I. A student having a confirmed positive chemical substance screen will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the nursing program, in accordance with established Division of Nursing disciplinary policies and procedures.

J. A student’s failure to submit to reasonable suspicion drug testing, or any attempt to tamper with, contaminate, or switch a sample will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program.

4). Voluntary Admission of Substance Abuse

A. A student who voluntarily reports to the Division of Nursing faculty or administrators that he/she has a substance abuse problem, will be assisted by the chair of the Division of Nursing to obtain services through university Counseling Services.

B. Continued participation in the nursing program will be at the discretion of the chair of the Division of Nursing.

5). Readmission after a Positive Chemical Substance Screening

A). Any student who is unable to complete the clinical component of a required course due to a positive chemical substance screen and has not had a felony drug arrest may apply for readmission to the nursing program. To be considered for readmission, the following conditions must be met:

- Complete substance abuse treatment program approved by the IUPUC Division of Nursing
- Have the approved treatment agency submit a letter to the Chair of the Division of Nursing verifying completion of a substance abuse treatment program
Submit to an unannounced chemical substance screen at the student’s expense prior to readmission (a positive chemical substance screen will result in ineligibility for readmission).

- Submit to random chemical substance abuse screens as required by the Division of Nursing while enrolled in the nursing program. A positive screen, at any time, will result in dismissal from the Division of Nursing.
- Any student seeking readmission must submit all appropriate documentation for review by the APG committee of the Division of Nursing.

Confidentiality

Individual test results of the chemical substance screen will not be provided to clinical partners. No release of information will be made without the written consent of the student, unless in response to an appropriate judicial process such as a subpoena or court order. There will be a group list of those qualified to attend a clinical course as a result of the pre-clinical chemical substance screening process.

Consequences of Permissible Drug Use

Some of the classes of drugs for which screening will be conducted are available by prescription from health care providers. Prescription drugs prescribed to a student by an appropriate health care provider may nevertheless be subject to abuse. The fact that a student has a prescription for one or more of the classes of drugs which are legally prescribed by a health care provider does not necessarily, in and of itself, excuse the student from the effect of the policy.

When a student is prescribed a medication that may impair cognitive and/or motor functions, the Division of Nursing expects the student not to attend clinical or laboratory courses while impaired by the prescribed medication. If the faculty observes changes in appearance or behavior that is reasonably interpreted as being caused by properly used prescribed medications, if in the clinical setting, the student will negotiate transportation from the clinical facility and not return until the cognitive and/or motor impairment is resolved. The student will continue to be held to the course attendance requirements. The student may be required to have a physician’s written endorsement that he/she is safe to practice nursing while taking prescribed medications before being permitted to return to the clinical or laboratory setting.

Impairment Resulting from Lack of Sleep

When a student is not functioning optimally due to a lack of sleep, the student should not attend clinical or laboratory courses as this type of impairment is just as detrimental to patient safety as other types of impairment. Sleep deprivation has similar cognitive effects to the use of chemical substances. If the faculty observes changes in appearance or behavior that is reasonably interpreted as being caused by sleep deprivation or excessive tiredness, if in the clinical setting, the student will negotiate transportation from the clinical facility and not return until the
cognitive and/or motor impairment is resolved. Students who are excessively tired should not attend clinical or laboratory experiences until sufficiently rested. The student will continue to be held to the course attendance requirements. The student may be required to have a physician’s written endorsement that he/she is safe to practice nursing before being permitted to return to the clinical or laboratory setting.

References


History

Approved by Faculty Staff Council 4/26/2017.
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Approved:

Chair Policy and Procedure Committee

Division Head IU School of Nursing at IUPUC

Date