



# Impairment and Chemical Abuse Policy

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Policy Number: S - 11

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**Effective:** 3/2/2017  
**Last Updated:** 10/13/2022

**Responsible University Office:**  
*Division of Health Sciences at IUPUC*

**Responsible University Administrator**  
*Division Head*

**Policy Contact:**  
*Senior Administrative Assistant, 812-348-7250*

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## Scope

Indiana University Purdue University Columbus (IUPUC) Division of Health Sciences students.

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## Policy Statement

The Division of Health Sciences 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 Division of Health Sciences' at IUPUC goal for maintaining a drug free workplace and academic environments is in compliance with the federal Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988, according to requirements of the Indiana State Board of Nursing, in accordance with the Division of Health Sciences at IUPUC Student Handbooks, 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 Health Sciences 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 Health Sciences 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 can 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

**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.

**Division of Health Sciences student:** Any full-time or part-time student admitted to the Division of Health Sciences. This includes all degree tracks.

**Illegal pharmaceuticals:** 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 being used in a manner that is not consistent with established medical practice standards
- specific drugs screened for use include: alcohol, amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine, marijuana (THC), methadone, methamphetamines, opiates, oxycodone, phencyclidine (PCP).

**Impaired:** A person's mental or physical capabilities are reduced below their normal levels (with or without reasonable accommodations for disability). 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, judgement, 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.

**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.

**Pre-clinical testing:** Chemical substance use 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.

**Reasonable Suspicion Testing:** Chemical substance use 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.

**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

**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.

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## Procedures

**Agreement to Submit to Chemical Substance Use Testing:** A student participating in a Division of Health Sciences degree track must agree to submit to preclinical testing, additional testing as required by clinical agency, and reasonable suspicion testing when circumstances warrant such testing. The student shall sign an acknowledgement and consent form which evidences the student's consent to:

- Comply with the Division of Health Sciences 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 Division Head of the Division of Health Sciences
- The Division of Health Sciences 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 Division of Health Sciences program.

A clear chemical substance screen is required to begin or continue in the Division of Health Sciences 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.

**Pre-Clinical Substance Screening:** Students will be notified about the chemical substance screening in their admission letter. All students in all Division of Health Sciences programs will be required to complete a pre-clinical chemical substance screening prior to enrolling in the first clinical course.

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 Health Sciences and/or our clinical partners. Positive pre-clinical chemical substance tests will be confirmed by a second screen from the original sample. The Division Head of the Division of Health Sciences will notify the student of a confirmed positive substance screen. A student having a confirmed positive chemical substance screen will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Division of Health Sciences' program, in accordance with established Division of Health Sciences' disciplinary policies and procedures.

**Reasonable Suspicion Chemical Substance Use Screening:** 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.

Evidence of a student's use of alcohol or pharmaceuticals or impairment may be provided to any Division of Health Sciences faculty member by any individual, including employees of an affiliated clinical partner.

When individualized reasonable suspicion is found to exist, the faculty member begins the documentation processes by completing an incident report. 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 Division Head of the Division of Health Sciences, or, in the absence of the Division Head, a designee, and submit the incident report to the Division Head or designee. The faculty member making the report will coordinate the screening procedure with the Division of Health Sciences Division Head, or designee. Determination of whether drug testing is warranted under the facts and circumstances shall be made by the Division Head or designee of the Division of Health Sciences and general counsel.

Upon determination, the student shall receive a notice that chemical substance use screening is needed. The student shall bear the cost of the testing, and no advanced warning for testing is required. The student shall be provided with a list of drugs for testing as required by the Division of Health Sciences and/or the clinical partner. Positive reasonable suspicion chemical substance use screenings will be confirmed by a second screen of the original sample.

The Division Head of the Division of Health Sciences will notify a student of a confirmed positive chemical substance screen. A student having a confirmed positive chemical substance screen will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Division of Health Sciences' program, in accordance with established Division of Health Sciences' disciplinary policies and procedures. 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.

**Voluntary Admission of Substance Use:** A student who voluntarily reports to the Division of Health Sciences faculty or administrators that he/she has a substance use problem, will be assisted by the Division Head of the Division of Health Sciences to obtain services through university counseling services. Continued participation in the Division of Health Sciences program will be at the discretion of the Division Head of the Division of Health Sciences.

**Readmission after a Positive Chemical Substance Screening:** 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 Division of Health Sciences program. To be considered for readmission, the following conditions must be met:

- Complete substance use treatment program approved by the IUPUC Division of Health Sciences
- Have the approved treatment agency submit a letter to the Division Head of the Division of Health Sciences verifying completion of a substance use 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 chemical substance use screens as required by the Division of Health Sciences while enrolled in a Division of Health Sciences program. A positive screen, at any time, will result in dismissal from the Division of Health Sciences
- Any student seeking readmission must submit all appropriate documentation for review by the Admission Progression and Graduation Committee (APG) of the Division of Health Sciences

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## 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.

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## 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 use. 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 Health Sciences 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 they are safe to practice nursing while taking prescribed medications before being permitted to return to the clinical or laboratory setting.

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## 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, 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 they are safe to practice nursing before being permitted to return to the clinical or laboratory setting.

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## References

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## History

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