

Johns Hopkins Medicine Impairment Policy

PURPOSE

Impairment of performance by allied health learners can put patients at risk. Impairment shall be managed as a medical/behavioral illness. Implicit in this concept is the existence of criteria permitting diagnosis, opportunity for treatment, and with successful progress toward recovery, the possibility of returning to training in an appropriate capacity. Impairment may result from depression or other behavioral problems, from physical impairment, from medical illness, and from substance abuse and consequent chemical dependency.

The goals of this policy are to (1) prevent or minimize the occurrence of impairment, including substance abuse, among learners in allied health training programs sponsored by Johns Hopkins Medicine, (2) protect patients from risks associated with care given by impaired learners and (3) compassionately confront problems of impairment to effect diagnosis, relief from patient care responsibilities if necessary, treatment as indicated, and appropriate rehabilitation.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF IMPAIRMENT

Listed below are signs and symptoms of impairment. Isolated instances of any of these may not impair ability to perform adequately, but if they are noted on a continued basis or if multiple signs are observed, reporting may be indicated. The signs and symptoms may include:

1. Physical signs such as fatigue, deterioration in personal hygiene and appearance, multiple physical complaints, accidents, eating disorders.
2. Family stability disturbances.
3. Social changes such as withdrawal from outside activities, isolation from peers, inappropriate behavior, undependability and unpredictability, aggressive behavior and argumentativeness.
4. Professional behavior problems such as unexplained absences, tardiness, decreasing quality or interest in work, inappropriate orders, behavioral changes, altered interaction with other staff and inadequate professional performance.
5. Behavioral signs such as mood changes, depression, slowness, lapses of attention, chronic exhaustion, risk taking behavior, excessive cheerfulness, and flat affect.
6. Drug use indicators such as excessive agitation or edginess, dilated or pinpoint pupils, self-medication with psychotropic drugs, stereotypical behavior, alcohol on breath at work, uncontrolled drinking at social events, blackouts, and binge drinking.

III. SCOPE

This policy applies to all learners participating in allied health training programs sponsored by Johns Hopkins Medicine.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the program directors and faculty to communicate this policy to their learners and to enforce its provisions. Allied health learners who suspect that a co-learner is suffering impairment shall follow this policy and its procedures.

V. PROCEDURE

1. Education: To try and minimize the incidence of impairment, a program has been developed to educate learners about provider impairment, including problems of substance abuse, its incidence and nature and risks to the learner and patients. Education includes knowledge concerning signs and symptoms of impairment. All allied health learners shall be informed at orientation about learner impairment, this policy and the resources available. All learners shall be given a copy of the Institution's Policy on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Drug-Free Environment. All learners shall receive information regarding the counseling and referral resources available at the institution at which the training program is based. At the Johns Hopkins Hospital, this consists principally of the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FASAP) and the Professional Assistance Committee (PAC). At the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, services are provided through the Community Psychiatry Program. In addition, learner training shall include participation in departmental presentations given by FASAP and other professionals regarding learner impairment.

2. Counseling and Management:

2.1 The following services are available to learners and their families:

- Assessment and identification of personal, family, or work-related problems
- Brief counseling and crisis intervention
- Follow-up appointments when indicated
- Referral to resources within Johns Hopkins and/or the community

2.2 The following services are available to administrators, managers and supervisors:

- Managerial consultation and coaching
- Risk assessments
- Educational workshops and programs
- Organizational group interventions

3. Reporting: All faculty and learners possess a duty to report to an appropriate supervisor, in confidence, concerns about possible impairment both in themselves and in others.

If a learner is observed and/or suspected to be impaired while engaged in the performance of his or her duties, the following actions shall occur:

3.1 The observer shall report his/her concern to a responsible supervisor, ultimately the allied health Program Director. The individual making the report does not need to have proof of the impairment, but must state the facts leading to suspicions.

3.2 The person to whom the report is made shall report the concern to the Program Director. The Program Director or his/her designee will investigate the matter, in a confidential process.

3.3 If it is determined that a learner may have an impairment problem, the Program Director is responsible to refer the learner to a counseling and treatment, such as that offered by FASAP.

Failure of the learner to accept referral to counseling or to abide by the treatment program is considered grounds for disciplinary action and may result in suspension or dismissal from the program.

4. Self-Reporting: The Institution is eager to assist learners with impairment problems and encourages any learner with impairment problems to contact their Program Director or their institution's counseling resources for assistance. Learners shall not be subject to punitive actions for voluntarily acknowledging an impairment problem. (Note, however, that this will not excuse violations of other policies for which the learner is subject to disciplinary action.)

5. Continuation of Training: In order for a learner to resume training after a referral, there shall be satisfactory evidence of the successful completion of or participation in an appropriate treatment program. Further, the learner shall agree to a provisional period during which time the resident may be monitored and/or tested periodically.

6. Confidentiality: The identification, counseling and treatment of an impaired learner are deemed confidential, except as needed to carry out the policies of the Institution and as required by law.