

Impaired Practitioners

PURPOSE

Impaired practitioners are unable to practice medicine skillfully and safely because of physical or mental illness including loss of cognitive or motor skill or through the exclusive use of abuse of drugs, including alcohol. The purpose of this policy is to protect patient safety while at the same time attempting to rehabilitate practitioners impaired by addictive, psychiatric or emotional disease or physical illness through prompt recognition, referral and treatment.

POLICY

Suburban Hospital has the responsibility of maintaining a safe and healthy work environment and providing quality patient care. Substance abuse by a physician or allied healthcare provider is a significant hazard to patients, co-workers, and to the practitioner engaged in substance abuse. Drug refers to alcohol, illegal drugs, or wrongful use of legal drugs.

It is the intention of Suburban Hospital to identify substances of substance abuse that impacts the work place and, to the extent possible, assist involved physicians and allied healthcare providers in entering appropriate rehabilitation programs.

If a medical staff member recognizes that he/she has a substance abuse or impairment problem that may impact his/her ability to provide safe medical care, he/she may request a referral for treatment and rehabilitation through Med Chi by contacting the Vice President of Medical Affairs.

SUSPICION of SUBSTANCE ABUSE or IMPAIRMENT

It is the responsibility of each employee, medical staff member or other healthcare provider who observes, has reason to suspect, or has knowledge of a physician or allied healthcare provider in a condition that may impair his/her ability to provide patient care, who may pose a hazard to the safety and welfare of others, or who otherwise is in violation of this policy, to promptly report that fact in accordance with the procedures set forth in the policy. Some indications or impairment or substance abuse include, but are not limited to the following:

Disorientation	Unsteady Gait	Mental or Physical Deterioration
Hallucinations	Red Eyes	Chronic Tardiness
Paranoia	Slurred Speech	Diversion of Medications
Chronic Tardiness	Report of Abuse	Smell of alcohol on breath

- If there is an immediate concern about the patient safety, action may be taken to summarily suspend the practitioner's clinical privileges by the Chair or the Chair-elect of the Medical Staff, the Chair of any department, the Medical Executive Committee, the Vice President of Medical Affairs or the Hospital President in accordance with the Suburban Hospital Medical Staff Bylaws, Rules and Regulations.
- The practitioner will be escorted to Employee Health Occupation and Safety/Occupational Health Services (OHS) and a serum alcohol and /or urine drug screen sample will be obtained.
- Prior to testing the practitioner shall list all prescriptions and non-prescription drugs he has used in the last 30 days and explain in writing the circumstances surrounding each one.
- OHS will obtain a written consent for alcohol and other drug testing prior to specimen collection.

- Drug screen specimens will be collected and sealed in containers that have a non-resealable closure or evidentiary tape which assures against tampering. The specimen will be transported under a paper chain of custody.
- The practitioner may be immediately suspended and their medical staff membership and clinical privileges terminated if he/she switches, tampers or adulterates a drug specimen; or attempts to switch, tamper or adulterate a drug specimen.
- Any incident involving suspected practitioner impairment shall be reviewed by a Practitioner Health Committee. The Committee shall determine what further review, evaluation or investigation is appropriate and the Committee may consult with appropriate Medical Staff Leaders and Hospital representatives. The Committee may refer the practitioner to the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland, or any other program for evaluation. The Committee shall make recommendations as appropriate concerning whether any action should be taken with regard to the practitioner's Medical Staff membership and clinical privileges.
- Any suspended practitioner may be reinstated by the VPMA or the Hospital President, or designee, if the drug screen and any further evaluation indicate that the practitioner is not impaired, or at such time as a practitioner who has been determined to be impaired has taken appropriate steps to address the impairment.
- If the Hospital elects not to terminate a practitioner with a positive drug screen or evaluation, the practitioner may be required to participate in a rehabilitation program approved by the Practitioner Health Committee and must comply with any conditions established by the Hospital as a result of the evaluation. In addition, the practitioner must authorize release of the appropriate information concerning the practitioner's continued participation in any rehabilitation program. Random drug screenings also may be required by the committee.
- Refusal or failure to participate in a rehabilitation program, provide appropriate records and information, submit to random drug screening, or to comply with any other conditions shall be grounds for immediate suspension.
- All records, files, correspondence or other information or documents relating to any practitioner who is investigated for possible impairment or who is involved in any rehabilitation program shall be privileged and confidential and available only to the members of the Practitioner Health Committee and those Medical Staff leaders and Hospital representatives who are involved in investigating, evaluating, reviewing, making decisions and recommendations concerning impaired or potentially impaired practitioners.
- Any conditions imposed by the Impaired Practitioner Committee, all information concerning the practitioner may be made available to the Credentials Committee, Medical Staff Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees in connection with any recommended action relating to the practitioner's medical staff membership and or clinical privileges.