

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY  
WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA  
SCHOOL OF NURSING**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** February 17, 2012

**REVIEWED BY:** Student Affairs

**REVISED DATE:** May 2022

**REVIEW DATE:** February 2027

**Nursing Student Substance Abuse Policy**

Introduction

The School of Nursing, in conjunction with the University, strives to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for our nursing students. The School of Nursing faculty/staff and students must also ensure the safety, health, and welfare of the patients/clients with whom we interact. A nursing student may never risk patient welfare by acting under the influence of drugs, including alcohol, in any situation in which student responsibility for others is required, or may be required.

Students who endanger patients or others through the use of alcohol or drugs, or who violate the trust granted to them, are subject to disciplinary action through the School of Nursing, independent of any action which may be taken by other authorities.

We recognize that nursing students may bring with them, or develop, alcohol or other psychoactive drug use patterns and behaviors that may be diagnosed as abuse or dependence. The School is committed to a program that will assist impaired students in regaining their health while concurrently protecting the well-being of patients/clients as well as classmates, faculty, and staff.

State boards of nursing, such as Indiana State Board of Nursing, require that unlicensed students reveal any past legal, including actions expunged from one's records, and/or university actions that have been taken in relationship to inappropriate drug use, including excessive alcohol consumption. The state board may request, when licensure is sought, that students outline actions taken to assure that they are no longer impaired or at risk for impairment. Any professional licensed student who violates this policy may be reported to the appropriate state agency as indicated by ethical and legal parameters specified in the Nurse Practice Act.

Of particular concern is the unauthorized use of drugs to which a nursing student may have privileged access. Such drug misuse is a violation of societal trust and is viewed by the profession as an especially grievous offense.

It is the policy of Purdue University to comply with federal and state laws and regulations dealing with the usage and detection of drugs and alcohol. This policy is subject to change at the sole discretion of the University and is meant to supplement other relevant University policies, including but not limited to, the Alcohol-and Drug- Free Campus and Workplace Policy, Executive Memorandum C-44.

Policy

- A. Routine Testing. All nursing students prior to participation in a clinical nursing course will be required to participate in routine testing. An essential aspect of nursing education is student learning experiences in hospitals and other health care facilities which students must be able to complete. Clinical facilities

with which the School collaborates have their own policies requiring drug testing and criminal background checks for employees, students, and volunteers which govern routine drug testing and background checks completed on all students. The frequency of routine testing and background checks may be altered as these organizations modify their requirements. Routine testing must be completed by an entity designated by the School of Nursing. Failure to complete routine testing will result in a student being treated the same as having a positive test.

- B. For Cause Testing. To ensure compliance with institutional policies and to promote a safe and healthy work environment, the School of Nursing may require students to submit to drug and/or alcohol testing “for cause” based upon reasonable suspicion of a) substance abuse, b) unauthorized use or possession of alcohol on campus or at a health care setting, or c) use of or possession of illicit drugs at any time.

Reasonable suspicion of substance abuse may be based upon, but is not limited to, the following criteria:

1. Direct observation of drugs or alcohol use or possession and/or demonstration of physical symptoms of the influence of drugs or alcohol
2. A pattern of abnormal or erratic behavior consistent with alcohol or drug abuse. This includes behavior, speech, body odor, or appearance that is indicative of the use of alcohol or drugs such as odor of alcohol or drugs, unsteady or staggering gait, rapid or slurred speech, pinpoint or dilated pupils, unresponsiveness, bloodshot eyes, fine motor tremors, difficulty participating in activities, nausea, vomiting, sweating, incoherent speech, and verbal or physical outbursts.
3. Self-report of drug use or alcohol abuse, unsafe behavior, unsatisfactory care for others, and threats to harm self or others.
4. Arrest or conviction for a drug or alcohol related offense; identification as the focus of a criminal investigation into illicit drug use, possession or trafficking
5. Evidence that a student has tampered with a previous drug or alcohol test
6. Possession of drug paraphernalia

- C. Students who test positive on a routine drug test or a test for cause will be referred to the Assistant Head of the applicable program or his/her designee who will review their test results and collaborate with the Head of the School of Nursing regarding sanctions. If a student refuses evaluation or consent to share the results of an evaluation, he/she may be subject to disciplinary procedures including dismissal from the program. Any attempt to delay, hinder, or tamper with any testing, or to alter the results of testing will be considered a refusal to comply with this policy.

Additionally this behavior may be reported to the University’s Office of the Dean of Students Office of Student Conduct for possible disciplinary action in accordance with the University’s Student Conduct Policy. Students continuing in the program will be subject to random drug testing at any time while completing nursing coursework.

- D. Any student arrested or convicted of violating any federal, state, or local law pertaining to the manufacture, possession, sale, use or distribution of a drug or alcohol or misuse of prescribed medications must report this event to the Assistant Head of the applicable program or his/her designee within three days of the event and prior to any clinical contact with patients/clients and families.
- E. A student who suspects possible substance abuse or violation of this policy by another student has the responsibility to report this information. A report can be made to the student’s academic advisor and or Assistant Head for undergraduate or graduate programs. The identity of the individual making the report will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible consistent with the need to investigate the report and subject to legal requirements.

## **Procedures**

All students prior to participation in a clinical nursing course will be required to:

- Submit to routine testing and test negative before engaging in any clinical coursework. Testing is completed by an outside contracted federally certified laboratory with a strict chain of custody.
- If the drug screen shows diluted or adulterated results, students will need to retest at their own expense.
- If on routine testing a student has a positive test, the first step is for the student to interact with the Medical Review Officer (MRO) available to the student through the organization with whom the School has contracted for this testing. The MRO confirms the testing result outcome.

If drug use or alcohol abuse is suspected in an enrolled nursing course, the faculty member will:

- Remove student from setting
- Notify the assistant head for the applicable program to discuss next steps
- Confront student in a private environment and, if possible, in the presence of a witness
- Discuss behavior in question and allow student to provide response
- Decide if reasonable suspicion exists
  - If yes, arrange for testing (clinical facility protocol or School protocol of use of an outside agency, Regional Occupational Care Center [ROCC] for testing)
  - If no, allow student to return to clinical or class

If necessary, faculty will arrange for transport of student to testing site. Initial testing costs will be borne by the School of Nursing. Students will not be allowed to participate in clinical education until the situation has been resolved.

Faculty, or other reporting persons, will document the exact reason(s) why they have triggered testing. Every effort should be made to document the behavior and how the behavior is affecting the student's performance. Documentation should also include what observations led to a request for cause testing. Document will be submitted to the Assistant Head or designee within two business days. Whenever possible, corroborating statements from other faculty, administrators, clinical facility employees, students, or patients/clients should be obtained

## **Consequences**

Initial For-Cause Test is Negative:

If the drug or alcohol test is negative but the School has legitimate reasons to believe the student was to be impaired, the student will be referred to the Assistant Head for the applicable program or his/her designee who will review their test results/situation and collaborate with the Head of the School of Nursing regarding sanctions.

Routine Test is Positive:

If a routine drug or alcohol test is positive the student will be referred to the Assistant Head for the applicable program or his/her designee who will review their test results and collaborate with the Head of the School of Nursing regarding sanctions. Student will be notified of test results and a meeting will be scheduled.

#### Initial or Subsequent For-Cause Test is Positive:

Any student who fails an initial for-cause or subsequent cause alcohol or drug test will be subject to disciplinary sanctions, ranging from withdrawal from the semester's coursework to dismissal from the School. An individual's participation in, and successful completion of an approved drug or alcohol counseling program coupled with his/her consent to random testing will be considered positively in the review process, but does not ensure that the dismissal will not occur.

If continuing in the School of Nursing, the student will not be permitted to participate in clinical coursework until successfully undergoing an evaluation and treatment by a certified drug and alcohol counselor (refer to Appendix A Form). Upon completion of the program, the student will be tested at the student's expense at a time and place designated by the Assistant Head of the applicable program or his/her designee. If positive, the student will be dismissed from the School of Nursing. If a student fails to complete a test as requested or otherwise comply with this policy, the student will be dismissed from the School. If a subsequent for-cause test result is negative, the student can submit a written request to engage in coursework and will be eligible to enroll depending on space availability and acceptance by clinical sites. Random testing will continue as long as the individual is a student in the School. Because of the time that is required to complete treatment and testing, it is possible that the student will be delayed and need to re-work his/her plan of study with an academic counselor.

Students may be also subject to discipline pursuant to the University Regulations Governing Student Conduct, Disciplinary Proceedings, and Appeals, up to and including dismissal from the program or the university.

If a student fails to produce the requested sample by the date and time designated, the student will be treated as if the test result was positive.

#### **Confidentiality**

The University will take reasonable measures to ensure individual privacy under this Policy including, without limitation, keeping all drug and alcohol test results confidential to the extent possible. Drug or alcohol test results will be released in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

#### **Grievance and Appeal Procedures**

Pursuant to the University's Bill of Student Rights, any student can seek redress for any complaints related to the application or enforcement of this Policy through applicable University grievance policies and procedures, including Program appeal procedures.

#### **Access to Records**

The University will maintain records relating to these guidelines as required by law. Upon written request to the Assistant Head for Undergraduate Programs or the Assistant Head for Graduate Programs, a student will be provided copies of records pertaining to his or her drug or alcohol tests.

## **Definitions**

1. "Drugs" is defined as medication, any drug or substance whose use is legally prohibited, including any controlled substances, prescription or over-the-counter medication used in a manner inconsistent with its label or otherwise in a way that impairs the student.
2. "Drug 10-panel testing" means testing that includes, but is not limited to metabolites, marijuana (cannabinoids, THC), cocaine, opiates/opioids/narcotics (including meperidine, oxycodone, hydrocodone, methadone, buprenorphine, propoxyphene) phencyclidine (PCP), and amphetamines (including methamphetamines), benzodiazepines, and barbiturates.
3. "Medical Review Officer (MRO)" is a nationally certified, licensed medical doctor or osteopath responsible for receiving laboratory results under this policy who has knowledge of substance abuse disorders and has appropriate medical training to interpret and evaluate confirmed positive test results, medical history, and any other relevant biomedical information. Access to the MRO is through the agency contracted to complete the testing.
4. "Test positive for Drugs" is the level identified by the MRO in accordance with guidelines established for healthcare workers.
5. "Test positive for Alcohol" means an alcohol test that is at or exceeds the Department of Transportation Guidelines for blood, breath, or saliva testing depending on the test used by the given agency, e.g. blood alcohol content of 0.04 or greater (DOT, 2018).

**APPENDIX A**

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NURSING STUDENT AGREEMENT**

**Nursing Student Substance Abuse Policy**

Pursuant to violating the School's Nursing Student Substance Abuse Policy, I agree to undergo a professional evaluation by a certified drug and alcohol counselor to determine drug dependency and to participate in a recommended treatment plan. I understand that payment for the evaluation, treatment, and follow-up care and testing will be my responsibility.

If no treatment is recommended by the counselor, I will submit written evidence of such to the Assistant Head of the applicable program or his/her designee and submit a written request for reinstatement in clinical coursework, as defined in the Policy. If the counselor recommends a treatment plan, I understand that I must complete the plan and then submit a written request to engage in clinical coursework, written evidence of completion of the treatment plan, acknowledgment from the counselor that I am able to safely engage in clinical activities, and the terms of any required follow-up care to the Assistant Head. I understand that I will not be allowed to be registered for clinical courses during my treatment.

I also realize that I will be subject to random testing throughout the time I am enrolled in a nursing program. I realize that a second positive drug test or further violation of the Policy will result in dismissal from the School of Nursing.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_