



PHYSICIAN IMPAIRMENT

Signs and symptoms of potential impairment in health care professionals.
(Standard MS 4.80)

SIGNS	SYMPTOMS
<i>Personal</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deteriorating personal hygiene (e.g. over-use of cologne or mouthwash, disheveled appearance). 2. Multiple physical complaints 3. Personality and behavioral changes (moods swings, emotional crises, irritability, loss of compassion) 4. Physical symptoms (blackouts, sweating, tremors) 5. Preoccupation with mood altering agents (hiding or protecting supply, using more than intended)
<i>Friends and Community</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal isolation 2. Embarrassing behavior 3. Legal problems (e.g. drunken driving, speeding tickets) 4. Neglect of social commitments 5. Unpredictable, out of character behavior, such as inappropriate spending
<i>Home and Family</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Withdrawal from and neglect of family, including avoidance of family activities (e.g. unexplained absence from the home) 2. Behavior with accompanying excuses by family or friends 3. Arguments, fights, or violent outbursts 4. Sexual problems, possibly including extra-marital affairs 5. Antisocial behavior of children 6. Financial crises 7. Separation or divorce
<i>Professional</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change in work pattern (more or less hours), or disorganized scheduling 2. Frequent "breaks" or absence 3. Inaccessibility to patients and staff 4. Excessive drug use (samples, prescriptions, etc.) 5. Complaints by patients regarding physician's behavior 6. Alcohol on breath 7. Rounding at inappropriate times 8. "Hanging around" OR or ER 9. Deteriorating relationship with staff, patients, and/or colleagues 10. Deteriorating performance



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT IMPAIRMENT *WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW*

Q: What are the appropriate steps to take if I have concerns about potential impairment in another physician?

A: It is always appropriate to express your concern to that colleague (if you feel comfortable doing so). Be specific, identifying what you have noticed that is concerning to you. Offer to help, if you wish. Help may include referral to another physician, counselor, or a peer support organization.

If you feel uncomfortable directly approaching the colleague, or if your concerns persist after speaking to him/her, contact the Peer Support Committee Chairman, a CDC Chairperson, the President of the Medical Staff, or the CEO of the Hospital, to report your concerns. The Medical Staff Office will be happy to help you contact one of these individuals.

Q: What does a report to the Medical Staff Leadership entail?

A: A report of this nature requires a written notification of your concerns, specifically describing what behaviors or actions have raised your concerns. You will have to identify yourself in the report. Your report is not a "complaint" about the colleague, but a report of concern. It will be held in strict confidence. The individual will NOT be informed as to who raised the concern (although he/she will be informed about the concern itself as part of the investigation).

Q: What will the Peer Support Committee do?

A: The Peer Support Committee will be given any report or concern about a practitioner regarding potential impairment. They will then investigate the circumstances regarding the situation. This investigation may include interviews with the physician in question, as well as the individual who expressed the concern. This investigation will be conducted in a confidential, expeditious manner. The Committee will make a report, including possible recommendations to the Medical Executive Committee for further action, if necessary. This process is intended to be supportive to the physician, not punitive or disciplinary. *If a problem or impairment does exist, the intent is to assist the physician to a level of professional and personal function free of the effects of impairment.*

Q: Can I self-report without sanction?

A: Absolutely. If you are in need of help, we want to help you. Please contact a CDC Chairperson, the President of the Medical Staff, the hospital's CEO, or the Chairman of the Peer Support Committee for assistance. Call the Medical Staff Office for contact information.