

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
NURSING CARE QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMISSION**

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**WHPS Procedure Summary 11.01: Unauthorized Substance Use**

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For purposes of monitoring and “uniform regulatory standards, noncompliance is the failure to adhere to any of the terms of the program contract. “Relapse is defined as any unauthorized use or abuse of alcohol, medications or mind-altering substances. Patient safety is jeopardized if a relapse is not identified early. Consistent monitoring and immediate identification of relapse is critical as it puts the nurse’s health in immediate jeopardy and may be fatal.”

(Substance Use Disorder in Nursing, National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 2011).

**SUMMARY**

1. Reporting

A. The nurse will:

- Report all unauthorized substance use to Washington Health Professional Services (WHPS), the Worksite Monitor (WSM), and Peer Support Group (PSG) within 24 hours.
- Cease practice immediately
- Complete an observed drug test as scheduled and requested by WHPS.
- Schedule a substance use evaluation by a Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) certified service within two (2) days.
- Begin recommended level of treatment as soon as possible, and,
- Not return to practice until the treatment provider and WHPS determine the nurse is safe to practice.

2. Monitoring:

A. WHPS will:

- Assess each case individually with relapse behavior (e.g., use after a period of abstinence, return to prior use pattern, little or no program contact, use within the context of active practice) taken into account regarding appropriate response.
- Unauthorized use occurring during initial treatment and/or prior to submission of negative drug screens after entry may not be considered relapse due to lack of a period of abstinence or significant recovery time.

- All instances of unauthorized substance use will be staffed at the next weekly case staffing meeting if not sooner, to include a review of the nurse's contract compliance history and substance use evaluation.
- All unauthorized use will be reported to the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NCQAC).

3. Unauthorized substance use contract time guidelines:

- A. Add at least six (6) months to a year to the contract allowing for at least two (2) consecutive years of sobriety immediately prior to the possibility of graduation.
- B. In the interest of public safety, cases that involve, but are not limited to workplace diversion, patient harm, or illegal activity (e.g., prescription forgery) may result in restarting contract duration.
- C. When substance use disorder evaluations result in an elevated diagnosis, contract length and components will be adjusted accordingly.
- D. The nurse has ten (10) working days to return the amended contract. If the nurse chooses not to accept the contract, the nurse will be referred to the NCQAC.

## Procedure 11.01: Unauthorized Substance Use

### Process Chart

**Unauthorized Substance Use** is any unauthorized use of alcohol, medications or mind-altering substances



The nurse is required to inform WHPS, their WSM and PSG Facilitator of any unauthorized use and cease direct patient care until re-evaluated and deemed safe to return to practice.

The nurse must schedule an evaluation within two (2) business days and begin recommended treatment as soon as possible



WHPS will verify practice cessation and schedule follow-up drug testing



All instances of unauthorized substance use will be staffed at the next weekly case staffing meeting and reported to the NCQAC\*



Contract time may be extended as follows::

- Add at least six (6) months to a year to the contract allowing for at least two (2) consecutive years of sobriety immediately prior to the possibility of graduation. Cases involving diversion, patient harm, or illegal activity may result in restarting the contract duration.
- When substance use disorder evaluations result in an elevated diagnosis, contract length and components will be adjusted accordingly.

The nurse has ten (10) working days to return the amended contract. If the nurse chooses not to accept the contract, the nurse will be referred to the NCQAC.

\*Unauthorized use occurring during initial treatment and/or prior to submission of negative drug screens after entry may not be reported due to lack of significant recovery time