

Contacting ISNAP: When is the Right Time?

The Indiana State Nurses' Assistance Program (ISNAP) is contracted with the state of Indiana to assess nurses who may have a substance use disorder and to monitor nurses with substance use disorders.

Many nurses are uncertain about the best time to contact ISNAP after being arrested for a DUI or being terminated for a positive urine drug screen. Other nurses are aware they have a problem with substance use and for a variety of reasons do not choose to contact ISNAP. Some nurses have reported to the Board of Nursing that their attorneys were unaware of the ISNAP program and unaware of what the state statutes require nurses to do when arrested for a DUI or other substance use related offenses.

In most cases the best time to contact ISNAP is as soon as possible. ISNAP can provide information to any nurse who needs information about the requirements for completing an assessment with ISNAP and what might be required should the nurse agree to come into monitoring with ISNAP. ISNAP can assist any nurses with locating a treatment provider for an assessment and necessary treatment. A nurse who has been arrested may be able to fulfill some of the requirements for criminal probation even before he or she appears in court by enrolling with ISNAP ahead of time.

Any nurse who has been terminated or arrested for substance use will have to disclose this to the Board of Nursing when it is time for licensure renewal. ISNAP needs to be contacted at least 3 months before a nursing license is renewed if the nurse wishes to further demonstrate to the Board of Nursing that he or she is safe to practice as a nurse. There are times when ISNAP can determine that a nurse does not meet criteria for monitoring prior to his or her appearance with the Board of Nursing. ISNAP can then inform the Board of Nursing that the assessment indicates that the nurse appearing is safe to practice when the nurse appears for licensure renewal.

Nurses who contact ISNAP before being directed to do so by the Board of Nursing or the Attorney General's office demonstrate a high level of self-accountability and an honest willingness to demonstrate that they are addressing any substance use issues that can impact their capacity to practice nursing safely. If a nurse comes into monitoring with ISNAP prior to his or her appearance with the Board of Nursing, ISNAP can confirm with the Board that the nurse is in good compliance with the assessment process or with their monitoring program with ISNAP.

Statistics indicate that monitoring programs for nurses reduce the number of relapses in nurses by 45%. This means that nurses suffering from chemical dependence are less likely to relapse if they come into a monitoring program. This also means that they are less likely to endanger public safety if they come into a monitoring program.

Every nurse who agrees to come into monitoring with ISNAP must inform their current manager of their involvement with ISNAP. Many nurses fear that they will be terminated upon disclosing this information to their employer. Employers are more likely to retain

nurses who voluntarily disclose their problems with substance use and involvement with ISNAP than those who do not. Most employers terminate nurses if they discover from other sources that the nurse has a substance use disorder.

For all the reasons listed above, nurses who are in need of assistance due to a substance use related arrest or termination need to contact ISNAP as soon as possible. It is the goal of the ISNAP staff to protect the public and to support nurses as they seek to recover from substance abuse or dependence. By getting involved with the ISNAP program, nurses can demonstrate to the Board of Nursing and their employers that they are safe to practice nursing and are not a danger to public safety.

Nurses can contact ISNAP at 1-800-638-6623 or 317-295-9862. Nurses can also obtain information about the ISNAP program by going to our website at indiananurses.org and clicking on the link to the ISNAP program which is located on the bottom right section of the first web page.

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