

DUI's: A Common Mistake that Can Be Avoided

The holidays are close at hand. This is a time of the year when many people are likely to drink socially. It is also a time of the year when many people make the mistake of driving while intoxicated.

During personal appearances for renewal with the Board of Nursing, many nurses have to divulge an arrest for a DUI. This is a difficult public disclosure for nurses. Most nurses feel shame and embarrassment about the arrest for a DUI. ISNAP and the Board of Nursing would greatly prefer that nurses avoid the danger of driving while intoxicated. This educational article has been written with the hope that the number of nurses who are arrested for a DUI can be decreased.

Some nurses mistakenly believe that the Board is less concerned when a nurse's substance use occurs while the nurse is not at work. The Board is very concerned when a nurse endangers the public even when the nurse is not working. Any nurse who drives while intoxicated endangers the public.

Two alcoholic beverages in 1 hour will lead to a breathalyzer of .08 or greater. The breathalyzer will be higher if the individual makes the mistake of drinking on an empty stomach. The level of an individual's blood alcohol level is also affected by the individual's size and weight. Anyone who has had gastric bypass surgery can end up driving intoxicated after only 1 drink. Nurses with a history of gastric bypass should never drink and drive.

Women on average absorb 30% more of the alcohol in each drink compared to men. It takes women twice as long to metabolize alcohol. It will take 2 hours, not one hour for a woman to metabolize the alcohol in 1 drink. If it is a "double", it will take a woman 4 hours to metabolize the alcohol.

Consequences for a first time DUI are painful. No price tag can be placed on the embarrassment a nurse suffers due to a DUI especially if it is published in the local newspaper. The legal expense varies from county to county. By the time a nurse pays the legal expenses, the cost will be several thousand dollars.

The Board can choose to place the nurse's license on probation after a first time DUI even if the nurse does not meet criteria for monitoring with ISNAP.

Nurses who have been arrested for a DUI would be wise to contact ISNAP. The nurse is responsible for payment of the substance use assessment, and treatment costs. Nurses who are placed in monitoring must also pay for the drug screens they complete while in monitoring. The nurse must divulge the DUI to his or her manager if this has not already been disclosed because ISNAP must receive reports from the nurse's manager.

The best way to avoid all the embarrassment and expense of a DUI is for an individual to abstain from drinking alcohol if he or she is going to drive after leaving a restaurant or social event. At the very least, a nurse should limit him or herself to one drink. One drink is a 12 ounce beer, 4 ounces of wine, or one shot of liquor in a mixed drink. Don't drink alcohol on an empty stomach. Having a designated driver or calling a taxi or Uber is much cheaper than a DUI and allows the nurse to avoid endangerment of the public. Doctors advise individuals who have had a gastric bypass to abstain from alcohol. That is good medical advice. It is not uncommon for individual's who have a history of gastric bypass to develop substance use disorders.

ISNAP is here to help nurses resolve issues resulting from a DUI arrest. If you have been arrested for a DUI, you can contact Robin Riebsomer the ISNAP Intake Coordinator at 1-800-638-6623 ext 107. You can learn more about the ISNAP program at our website indiananurses.org.