Impairment Policy

The Missouri State University School of Nursing is committed to a legal, professional, and ethical responsibility to provide a safe teaching and learning environment for its students, guests, and clients. Abuse of drugs and alcohol disrupts this environment and interferes with the academic environment. Nursing students must not be impaired chemically while participating in any learning experience, including those occurring in a classroom, laboratory, or clinical setting.

The School of Nursing defines the chemically impaired student as a person who, while in the academic or clinical setting, is abusing, either separately or in combination, alcohol, over-the-counter medication, illegal drugs, prescribed medications, inhalants, or synthetic designer drugs. Abuse of substances includes episodic misuse or chronic use that has produced psychological and/or physical symptoms.

Nursing students are expected to be aware of and to abide by pertinent laws and regulations set forth by the federal and state governments, the University, and clinical agencies where practical experiences are sought. Unlawful possession, use, or distribution of drugs and/or alcohol by students is strictly prohibited. Violations will result in dismissal from the nursing program.

Procedure for Faculty Intervention With Impaired Students

When there is reasonable suspicion or cause to believe a student is or recently has been under the influence of any drug or alcohol, the student will be removed from the clinical or academic setting. The faculty will direct the student to submit to drug/alcohol testing and sign a consent form agreeing to submit to such testing. Failure to agree to such testing shall be sufficient cause. The student will receive an “F” for the course and/or clinical and not progress in the program. The refusal for testing will be documented on the consent form and witnessed by the faculty.

Within one hour of completing the consent form, the student shall report to an approved lab that uses the chain of custody procedure for blood and/or urine testing. A University representative will verify the student’s identity prior to specimen collection. The student may not drive a motor vehicle to this lab or from the lab to home. The student will be responsible for all transportation costs, as well as any costs associated with the blood and/or urine testing for drugs or alcohol. The student may not attend class or clinical activities until the results of the blood and/or urine testing have been reviewed by the SON Director. The results will be kept confidential and will be reported to the SON Director, Program Director, and reporting faculty. The School Director and/or Program Director will meet with the student to discuss the behaviors, results, and sanctions (see Policy on Professionalism and Professional Conduct). A positive blood and/or urine drug screen will result in dismissal from the nursing program.

If the student location or time of day prohibits drug testing within the required time frame, the student will be removed from clinical based on observed unprofessional behaviors and the Policy on Professionalism and Professional Conduct will be enforced.
Discretion must be given to the faculty in recognizing the usual signs and symptoms of drug and/or alcohol use. The following is a list of possible signs and symptoms:

1. Frequent absences from class, clinical, or lab and/or disappearance from such
2. Isolation and withdrawal
3. Patient care errors, particularly medication errors
4. Detectable odor of alcohol
5. Increasingly poor decision and judgment
6. Illogical or sloppy charting
7. Unusual accidents/incidents
8. Deteriorating personal appearance
9. Changes in motor function/behavioral patterns including personality changes, mood swings, illogical thought patterns, gait disturbances, impaired dexterity, slurred speech, drowsiness/sleepiness, and papillary changes