



A Peer Assistance Monitoring Program of the  
Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

1. How large of a problem is substance use disorder among pharmacists, and how long does it usually take pharmacists to recover?
2. What kinds of problems will the Pharmacist Health Program (PharmHP) at the Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society accept, and can we be sued for reporting a pharmacist?
3. What are the benefits of the PharmHP and is there any cost?
4. If a person is referred to the PharmHP, does this threaten his or her license?
5. Is the PharmHP affiliated with the State Board of Pharmacy, and how does the PharmHP work with the board?
6. Is the PharmHP part of the Physicians' Health Program (PHP) at the Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society?

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#### **1. How large of a problem is substance use disorder among pharmacists, and how long does it usually take pharmacists to recover?**

- Pharmacists are people too. Substance use disorder is as prevalent among pharmacists as in the general population.
- Recovery prospects for pharmacists in specialized programs like PharmHP are higher than for the general public. Initial recovery steps can take months.
- Long-term recovery must be managed just as a chronic condition. It is a lifelong commitment to remain in stable recovery.

#### **2. What kinds of concerns will the PharmHP address, and can we be sued for reporting a pharmacist?**

- The PharmHP serves pharmacists and healthcare providers with substance use disorders, mental health issues, and behavioral concerns.
- Those with behavioral problems or sexual boundary issues are referred for evaluation. Often these are part of a substance use disorder or psychiatric disorder. Subsequent PharmHP involvement will depend on the diagnosis.
- Lawsuits can be filed for various reasons, however in the case of referring a pharmacist to the PharmHP, the potential harm to patients if an impaired pharmacist practices must be considered.

#### **3. What are the benefits of the PharmHP and is there any cost?**

- The PharmHP works. A high percentage of participants adhere to the program and have abstained from drugs or alcohol for five years or longer. A distinctive feature of the PharmHP is its comprehensive long-term monitoring system.

- PharmHP staff assist with inquiries from employers, partners, and spouses, and help confront pharmacists with problems.
- The program has extensive experience with treatment facilities nationwide that would be best suited to a particular individual's needs.
- Our medical director is trained in addiction medicine.
- There is no cost for the referring source; participants bear the costs of treatment, drug testing, ongoing therapy, and monitoring fees.
- A scholarship is available to help with monitoring costs.

**4. If a person is referred to the PharmHP, does this threaten his or her license?**

- No. If the individual is not revealed to the State Board of Pharmacy at the time of the referral, the referral is confidential and will not threaten his or her license.

**5. Is the PharmHP affiliated with the State Board of Pharmacy, and how does that relationship work?**

- The PharmHP is a program of The Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society. Cases referred directly to the PharmHP are not reported by the PharmHP to the State Board of Pharmacy.
- The board monitors pharmacists referred by licensure application or direct reports and receives quarterly compliance reports from PharmHP.

**6. Is the PharmHP part of the Physicians' Health Program at the Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society?**

- PharmHP is part of the Physicians' Health Program, which has expanded to include pharmacists.
- Pharmacist perspectives are represented on the PHP Advisory Committee to ensure comprehensive service to all licensees.

**If you have additional questions, please give us a call at (866) 747-2255 or (717) 558-7819.**

**For more information, please go to:**

**<https://www.foundationpamedsoc.org/home/paphp/about-paphp>**

The mission of the Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society is to provide programs and services for individual physicians and others that improve the well-being of Pennsylvanians and sustain the future of medicine.

The mission of the Physicians' Health Program is to promote early identification and facilitate rehabilitation of physicians and other eligible health care professionals and trainees with concerns relating to substance use disorders, mental health disorders, and/or behavioral concerns. Our goal is to coordinate assessment and treatment as well as provide monitoring and advocacy to ensure the safe practice of their profession, and the safety of the public.