



SUBSTANCE USE POLICY FOR LEARNERS UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

The University of Pittsburgh Policy CS 04, Drug- Free Workplace/Drug-Free Schools (<https://www.policy.pitt.edu/drug-free-workplace-drug-free-schools-06-02-01>) and the University of Pittsburgh Student Code of Conduct ([Student Code of Conduct Published.pdf \(pitt.edu\)](#)) provide the university policies and guidance regarding the unhealthy use of alcohol, prescribed medications or non-prescribed substances, such as cannabis or stimulants.

The School of Pharmacy has developed the following policy to supplement the University policy and outline specific actions to assist learners in all learning tracks within the school (e.g., PharmD, M.S. or PhD students, fellows) who seek help for or are identified as possibly having a substance use disorder (SUD) or signs of possible unhealthy use of such substances.

In developing the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy policy and procedures regarding substance use disorders in our learners, our stated concerns are to:

- Optimize the health and well-being of our learners, staff and faculty to sustain a thriving academic community.
- Provide compassionate assistance to learners with substance use disorders
- Identify avenues for confidential and professional evaluation and, as necessary, treatment of substance use disorders
- Afford recovering learners who are not legally restricted, and are no longer impaired, the opportunity to continue their pharmacy education without stigma or penalty.
- Meet the legal and professional responsibilities of the School of Pharmacy to our communities and our profession, as substance use among pharmacists and other healthcare providers represents significant threats to public safety.

This policy is based on the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Guidelines for the Development of Addiction and Related Disorders (AARD) Policies for Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy and reflects Pitt Pharmacy's recognition that SUD (including alcohol use disorder) are diseases that affect all of society. The School of Pharmacy confirms and accepts its responsibility to assist learner pharmacists with SUD toward recovery.

The School of Pharmacy is committed to a dual approach for individuals with suspected or documented SUD, recognizing that support, compassion, and understanding is our responsibility to the learner. The school has identified individuals for each program (described below) responsible for confidential discussion and potential referral of learners. In all cases, learners will be offered information and/or directly connected with University of Pittsburgh campus resources including [Collegiate Recovery Program | Division of Student Affairs \(pitt.edu\)](#) and the University Counselling Center (<https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/counseling/>)

Policy for Student Pharmacists

1. The Associate Dean of Student Success (ADSS) and the Director of Experiential Learning (DEL) or, the Dean's designee if those individuals are unavailable, share responsibility for administering this policy and procedures for student pharmacists.

Student pharmacists who have concerns that they may be experiencing physical, cognitive or emotional consequences from unhealthy use of substances are strongly encouraged to self-report and voluntarily seek help by working with these designated individuals for consultation and referrals.

Peers, faculty, staff, or preceptors who are concerned about a student pharmacist who may be exhibiting signs of unhealthy use of substances have a professional obligation to address these concerns with the individual. This obligation also requires them to bring their concerns to the ADSS. The identity of the individuals reporting individuals with possible SUD will be strictly confidential. Retaliation against individuals who report such concerns is prohibited.

Occurrences that may lead to reasonable suspicion of a SUD include, but are not limited to:

- witnessed diversion or use
- citation or arrest involving drugs or alcohol,
- changes in behavior consistent with impairment
- positive drug screen

It is noted that drug screening is required prior to the placement of learner pharmacists in pharmacy practice experiences by many affiliated institutions that provide pharmacy practice activities to learners. As the school is responsible for facilitating the drug screening process on behalf of many practice sites, the DEL may become aware of positive drug screen results. A reported drug screen positive for illicit substance use will preclude placement of the student learner at practice sites and require notification of the PA PHP (see below).

2. Self-reporting or reports from other individuals will cause a confidential investigation by the ADSS/DEL to be undertaken. If warranted, and in addition to university resource referrals, the learner pharmacist will be referred to the PA PHP for evaluation and possible treatment.

Due to the unique patient care responsibilities inherent in the pharmacy profession, coupled with Pennsylvania law mandating reporting of impaired health professionals, and the desire of the School of Pharmacy to seek a favorable health and professional outcome for impaired learners, the School is obligated to make referral of student learner pharmacists with SUD or suspected SUD to the Pennsylvania Physicians' Health Program (**PA PHP**; <https://www.foundationpamedsoc.org/home/paphp/about-paphp>). These individuals will arrange for the learner pharmacist to contact the Pennsylvania Physicians' Health Program. All services, support, and screening associated with the PA PHP will be confidential.

PA PHP has the mission to promote early identification and effective care for healthcare professionals and trainees with concerns relating to substance use disorders, mental health disorders, and/or behavioral concerns. Referral to PA PHP is required by law to provide maintain the quality of care provided by pharmacists and other healthcare professionals to patients in PA.

The goals of PA PHP are to:

- Provide compassionate assistance to learners with substance use disorders
- Provide assistance in a way that protects the rights of learners with SUD to receive treatment in compliance with statutes and policies affirming confidentiality.
- Afford recovering learners who are not legally restricted, and are no longer impaired the opportunity to continue their education without stigma or penalty.
- Provide alternative pathways for learners who will require more time and services to address their SUD.

3. Student pharmacists referred to the PA PHP will undergo a SUD evaluation at a site selected by the PA PHP. An evaluation deemed positive for a SUD may result in the PA PHP placing the student pharmacist under a treatment program contract. The duration of enrollment in the PA PHP program will be determined by the PA-PHP during the learner's enrollment in the Doctor of Pharmacy program for up to five years. When applicable, learners progressing into the profession after graduation, but who have not completed a contracted time period in the PA PHP program, will continue to be enrolled in the PA PHP program, under the contract, until they have successfully completed the minimum monitoring requirement.

Pitt Pharmacy supports the continued enrollment of a student pharmacist with a SUD provided they agree to undergo evaluation and, when necessary, treatment for SUD as coordinated through the PA PHP. A student pharmacist placed into a treatment program for a SUD may obtain a leave-of-absence from the school for an unspecified period of time, with guaranteed reentry into the school (assuming academic eligibility is intact at the end of the most recently completed semester and that all administrative obligations due to the school have been met) at a level appropriate to their previous academic progress.

4. The School of Pharmacy reserves the right to dismiss a learner pharmacist who fails to comply with the Substance Use Policy and/or a recommendation or contract with the PA PHP. Refusal to contact the PA PHP for evaluation, refusal to undergo a PA-PHP- recommended substance use disorder evaluation, or refusal to cooperate with the terms of the PA PHP-recommended treatment and monitoring program will necessitate reporting of the learner pharmacist to the Pennsylvania State Board of Pharmacy and will render the learner ineligible to fulfill the requirements for graduation from the Doctor of Pharmacy program. In such matters, the student circumstances will be referred to the Dean by the designated administrative individuals.
5. To fulfill professional responsibilities to patients and communities, the School of Pharmacy is obligated to remove a learner from experiential learning activities including patient care activities until the evaluation has occurred and the designated individual (DEL or ADSS) is notified of the results. All actions surrounding the referral and subsequent events will be confidential.

Student pharmacists with a suspected or documented SUD may not be placed in experiential practice sites until evaluated and approved by the PA PHP to do so. Student pharmacists referred to the PA PHP must sign a release allowing appropriate designated individuals at the school to send and receive confidential information regarding the learner's readiness to return to school activities.

A student with a suspected or documented SUD undergoing evaluation and/or participating in outpatient treatment may continue in the PharmD program of study (exception: in experiential learning and related activities and coursework) unless otherwise notified by the university or school.

6. All records related to actions involving a student pharmacist with a suspected or documented SUD will be securely collected, maintained, and disposed after graduation by the ADSS. Access to these records will be restricted to only those individuals authorized to review them. All records

may be released to the Dean or other authorized administrator.

7. No person functioning in an advocacy role for the recovery of learner pharmacists with SUD can be held liable for damages resulting from actions or recommendations made in the interest of the learner pharmacist as long as such person acts without malice and in the reasonable belief that such action or recommendation is warranted by the facts known to him after reasonable effort is made to obtain the facts on which such action is taken or recommendation is made. This includes persons who in good faith and without malice make a report of suspicion of a learner pharmacist with suspected SUD to a school official or PA PHP.
8. All learner pharmacists are encouraged to carry medical insurance with coverage for SUD. All external evaluation and treatment costs, including urine and/or blood drug/alcohol testing, of a SUD are the learner pharmacist's responsibility.

Policy for PhD, MS and Fellow Learners:

The University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy supports the referral of PhD, MS learners and fellows with SUD to counseling and recovery programs offered through the University of Pittsburgh. In all cases, learners will be offered information and/or directly connected with University of Pittsburgh campus resources including [Collegiate Recovery Program | Division of Student Affairs \(pitt.edu\)](#) and the University Counselling Center (<https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/counseling/>)

PhD or MS learners who hold pharmacist or pharmacy intern licenses will also be required to participate in the processes and procedures described above for learner pharmacists, working with the Director of Experiential Learning, the graduate program ombudsperson and the Director of the Graduate Program for evaluation and referral to PA PHP.

1. The ombudsperson for the graduate program and the Director of the Graduate Program, or the Dean's designee when such are absent, are responsible for administering this policy.
2. Peers, faculty, staff, or supervisors who suspect a PhD or MS learner has a SUD have a professional obligation to report such suspicion to the program ombudsperson. The identity of individuals reporting others with a possible SUD will be held in confidence. All actions surrounding the referral and subsequent events will be kept confidential.
3. The ombudsperson will arrange for learners to contact the University of Pittsburgh Counselling Center for evaluation and possible treatment. Pitt Pharmacy will support the continued enrollment of a PhD or MS learner with a SUD provided they agree to undergo evaluation and, when necessary, treatment for SUD. A learner placed into a treatment program for a SUD may obtain a leave-of-absence from the school for an unspecified time period, with guaranteed reentry into the school (assuming academic eligibility is intact at the end of the most recently completed semester and that all administrative obligations due to the school have been met) at a level appropriate to their previous academic progress.
4. Learners undergoing treatment for SUD will not be placed in laboratories or other sites with access to narcotics or other substances of potential abuse.
5. Refusal to be evaluated, refusal to undergo a recommended SUD evaluation, or refusal to cooperate with the terms of a recommended treatment and monitoring program, will render the learner ineligible to fulfill the requirements for graduation from the PhD or MS program. The School of Pharmacy reserves the right to dismiss a learner who fails to comply with either the terms of the Substance Use Policy or a recommendation or contract with an established substance use program. In such matters, the decision for dismissal will be referred to the Dean.
6. All records related to actions involving a learner with a suspected or documented SUD will be

securely collected, maintained, and disposed of after graduation by the ombudsperson. Access to these records will be restricted to only those individuals authorized to review them. All records may be released to the Dean or other authorized administrator if noncompliance with contractual terms necessitates termination of advocacy for the learner.

7. No person functioning in an advocacy role for the recovery of learner with SUD can be held liable for damages resulting from actions or recommendations made in the interest of the learner if such person acts without malice and in the reasonable belief that such action or recommendation is warranted by the facts known to him after reasonable effort is made to obtain the facts on which such action is taken or recommendation is made. This includes persons who in good faith and without malice make a report of suspicion of a learner with suspected SUD to a school official.
8. All learners are encouraged to carry medical insurance with coverage for SUD. All external evaluation and treatment costs, including urine and/or blood drug/alcohol testing, of an SUD are the learner's responsibility.
9. Upon request, a student must sign a release allowing appropriate designated individuals at the school to send and receive confidential information regarding the learner's readiness to return to school activities.

Approved July 2014

Revised and Approved August 2016; January 2024; August 2024