

# Washington Health Professional Services



**Estimates are approximately 15% of nurses may be diagnosed along the substance use disorder continuum.**

Substance use disorder is a chronic, progressive disease that, if left untreated, can be fatal. However, substance use disorder is treatable and treatment outcomes improve when the disease is identified early. When treatment is individually tailored to meet the nurse's needs and an appropriate, supportive monitoring program is in place, nurses in recovery can practice safely and continue to contribute to public health.



## Together



**The Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (commission) recognizes the need to establish a means of providing early identification and treatment options for nurses whose competency may be impaired due to substance use disorder.**

The commission intends that such nurses be treated and their treatment monitored so that they can return to, or continue to practice their profession in a manner that safeguards the public. The Washington Health Professional Services (WHPS) program is the commission's approved substance use monitoring program [www.doh.wa.gov/whps](http://www.doh.wa.gov/whps). The commission may refer nurses to WHPS as either an alternative to or in connection with disciplinary action.



# ANA

AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION

The American Nurses Association  
Code of Ethics

**recognizes the duty to take action to protect patients by reporting concerns and to ensure the potentially impaired nurse receives assistance.** This includes supporting the return to practice of nurses who have sought assistance and are ready to return to practice. Creating an environment that encourages reporting is vital to reducing the stigma, rehabilitating the nurse, and protecting the public. This approach is consistent with just culture, which encourages a response to the nurse's illness while maintaining accountability.



**In addition, nurses may voluntarily participate in WHPS without being referred by the commission.** Nurses voluntarily participating are not subject to disciplinary action for their substance abuse, and do not have their participation made known to the commission as long as they meet

WHPS requirements. Voluntary participation carries the advantage of immediate intervention and referral to treatment, bypassing what may otherwise be a long legal process before formal intervention. When there is no potential of patient harm, healthcare professionals and employers may meet statutory reporting requirements by referring a nurse directly to WHPS. **Contact WHPS at 360-236-2880, option #1, or [whps@doh.wa.gov](mailto:whps@doh.wa.gov).**



**The commission regulates the competency and quality of nurses under its jurisdiction by establishing, monitoring, and enforcing qualifications for licensing, consistent standards of practice, continuing competency**

**mechanisms, and discipline.** In accordance with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the commission supports the rehabilitation of nurses with substance use disorder through early identification, referral for treatment, and monitoring.



**Employers and associations may request live onsite and webinar presentations from WHPS. Contact WHPS at 360-236-2880 or [whps@doh.wa.gov](mailto:whps@doh.wa.gov).**