

Signs and Behaviors of Impaired Colleagues

It is often difficult to identify an impaired colleague. Anesthetists often enable colleagues to continue bad behavior or poor performance by making excuses, accepting inadequate work, or covering up mistakes. Coworkers may have certain legal responsibilities in identifying and reporting the chemically dependent CRNA. Many states have mandatory reporting laws which may hold colleagues responsible for harm to patients if they fail to report a coworker in whom abuse is suspected. In those states with alternative programs, confidential reporting to the programs absolves the colleague from reporting to the nursing regulatory board.

Patterns of behavior and consequences associated with substance misuse and dependency:

- Comes to work during scheduled time off and loiters around departmental drug supply
- Isolates and withdraws from peers
- Takes frequent bathroom breaks or disappears while on duty
- Expresses desire to take extra call
- Increasing or unexplained tardiness or absenteeism
- Gradual decline in work performance
- Consistently signs out more narcotics than peers
- Displays patterns of inappropriate drug choices and dosages
- Increasing mood liability with frequent, unexplained anger and overreaction to criticism
- Increasing difficulty with authority
- Becomes forgetful, unpredictable, confused, and lacks concentration
- Suffers from frequent illnesses or physical complaints
- Exhibits dishonesty, often over trivial or unimportant matters
- Makes elaborate excuses
- Suffers from tremors or “Monday morning shakes”
- Reveals evidence of alcohol or drug use, such as odor of alcohol on breath, heavy perfume or mouthwash, wearing long sleeves
- Appears intoxicated at social functions
- Is discovered comatose or dead

For more information, see Peer Assistance at www.aana.com

HOTLINES

Peer Assistance
800/654-5167

Anesthetists in Recovery (AIR)
215/635-0183

AANA Peer Assistance Advisors

serve as a resource for CRNAs and nurse anesthesia students; assist healthcare providers, institutions and agencies in the formulation of guidelines for intervention, treatment, aftercare and reentry into the workplace; and educate members of the profession and the public about addiction. Through the visionary efforts of the Peer Assistance Advisors, the AANA has maintained a strong commitment to the promotion of practitioner well-being and prevention and education for colleagues and their families concerning substance misuse issues.

Peer Assistance on the Web www.aana.com

Overview of AANA Peer Assistance –
History and FAQs

Information on Getting Help for Yourself and Others

Peer Assistance Advisors –
Contact information

Peer Assistance in Your State – National directory of state peer advisors, state peer assistance programs and state boards of nursing

Faculty and Student Resources –
Required components of a drug and alcohol program and educational aids

Manager and Supervisor Resources –
Sample policy/procedure for departments of anesthesia on chemical dependency

Reentry Resources and Refresher Programs

Educational Aids, Model Policies and Suggested Reading

Information for State Peer Advisors and Peer Assistance Committees

Wearing Masks DVDs

Links to:

- **Anesthetists in Recovery (AIR) for Sobriety** - online forum for CRNAs or students in recovery or seeking recovery
- **Partners in Recovery (PAIR)** - online support e-group
- **Treatment Centers**
- **Sites with Drug and Alcohol Addiction Information and Assistance**
- **Sites for Other Addictive Behaviors**



Bridging Public Safety and Practitioner Wellness
Council for Public Interest in Anesthesia
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The Council for Public Interest in Anesthesia (CPIA) promotes patient safety through consumer education and practitioner risk reduction strategies. The CPIA is responsible for the AANA Wellness Program and the activities of the AANA Peer Assistance Advisors. Peer Assistance is a major component of the AANA Wellness Program which promotes and encourages nurse anesthetists to develop healthy lifestyles and positive behavior choices.