

## **DRUG SCREENING AND TESTING: POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Policy Statement**

William Paterson University and the Department of Nursing are committed to providing a quality education for students admitted into the Nursing Program. In order to protect the integrity of the Nursing Program and the nursing profession and to safeguard the welfare of nursing students and patients receiving treatment from these students, this policy addresses drug and alcohol testing of nursing students involved in clinical activities. The purpose of this policy is to notify the student and faculty of the University's rules and testing procedures and to provide assistance and due process for students who test positive for drugs or alcohol. This policy applies to all students admitted to the Nursing Program and is effective immediately. It is the policy of William Paterson University to comply with federal and state laws and regulations dealing with the usage and detection of drugs and alcohol.

This policy is subject to change at the sole discretion of the University and is meant to supplement other relevant University policies including, but not limited to, the Alcohol and Drug Policy and the Drug-Free Workplace Policy. In addition, students must comply with individual clinical institution drug policies. All costs associated with services beyond those offered on campus are the sole responsibility of the student. Examples of this are: baseline drug testing, drug testing for a cause, remediation, or higher level of drug treatment (such as an inpatient drug treatment facility).

The goals of patient safety and optimizing student performance are at risk when a student is present who is under the influence of these substances. Nursing students involved in clinical activities must uphold the standards of the nursing profession to ensure safe, effective, and supportive client care. Because a student may have altered judgment and skills, appropriate management of abuse and addiction is critical for nursing education and practice.

Students who have admitted to previous drug/alcohol problems will be tested in accordance with this same policy as other students. These students are encouraged to continue their support group therapy during their academic semesters in clinical. Through this policy, the Department of Nursing seeks to balance a sense of compassion for the individual student with concern for the community as a whole.

### **DRUG SCREENING CLEARANCE PRIOR TO CLINICAL COURSES**

Drug screening clearance will be required of all nursing students prior to beginning their first clinical course and annually thereafter. Clearance will be completed prior to the beginning of the semester in which the first clinical laboratory takes place. Certain clinical facilities may require additional drug screen panels in which circumstance the individual students affected will be notified to retest at their own expense. Drug testing will take place off site at an independently contracted facility. Students will be given notice to report to the facility for testing. Positive results of the screening will be reviewed by a designated Medical Review Officer (MRO) from the independent contracted facility, a licensed physician who has knowledge of substance abuse disorders and has appropriate training to interpret and evaluate confirmed positive tests, medical

history and any other relevant biomedical information. The MRO will report test results to designated agents within the WPU Counseling, Health and Wellness Center.

### **Categories of Test Results**

1. Refusal to Test: If a student fails to produce the requested sample by the date and time designated, the student will be treated as if the test result was positive.
2. Negative Test Result: If the Drug test is negative, the student will be allowed to participate in clinical activities.
3. Positive Test Result: Any student who tests positive for drugs shall be withdrawn from all clinical courses and may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal from the program. Any student who does not comply with any request or step outlined in this policy shall also be withdrawn from all clinical courses and may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal from the program. Any student who tests positive for drugs shall be referred to Judicial Affairs at William Paterson University.

The decision to proceed in the program or be dismissed from the nursing program shall be jointly determined by a representative from Judicial Affairs, the Director of the Counseling, Health and Wellness Center and the Chair of the Nursing Department. If the student is not dismissed from the program, the student will not be permitted to participate in clinical until the student undergoes remediation (see below for remediation procedures). In addition, future participation in clinical is dependent on the length of time needed for the remediation process and clinical availability.

### **DRUG TESTING FOR A CAUSE**

The University prohibits the use or possession of alcohol and the use or unlawful possession of drugs during any clinical nursing experience. Drug testing of students after the initial drug screening clearance will be done upon “reasonable suspicion,” for specific behaviors observed when students are engaged in clinical nursing experiences. The testing will be conducted in accordance with the procedure set forth in this policy.

Students enrolled in clinical courses must consent for testing. Students using medications which may impact their ability to perform clinical duties must notify their faculty member prior to the clinical experience without disclosing the identity of their medication. The student is required to obtain documentation from his/her prescribing primary care provider that the medication will not interfere with the student’s ability to perform the clinical requirements safely. This documentation will become part of the student’s confidential Health and Wellness Center record.

If a “reasonable suspicion” exists that a student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the student shall be subject to immediate testing. Violations of this policy may result, subject to all of the due process rights to which a student is entitled, in disciplinary action, including dismissal from the University’s Nursing Program.

## **PROCEDURE- DRUG TESTING BASED ON “REASONABLE SUSPICION”**

### Suspicion of Substance Abuse

1. If clinical faculty or staff at a clinical facility determines that “reasonable suspicion” exists that a student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the student must be immediately removed from any clinical activity. This will be reported directly to the Chair of the Department of Nursing, or his/her designee, who will then consult with the Dean of College and Health and the director of Judicial Affairs. A “reasonable suspicion” exists when a student exhibits behavior, or a pattern of behavior, or whose physical condition is consistent with the signs and symptoms of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

These behaviors may be, but are not limited to (1) unsteady gait (2) odor of alcohol or illegal drugs on the breath or body (3) rapid, thick or slurring speech (4) aggressive or abusive language or behavior (5) disorientation or lethargy (6) nausea, vomiting, sweating (7) dilated or pinpoint pupils.

Other factors to consider include (1) time and attendance patterns (2) on-site accidents (3) difficulty remembering instructions or conversations (4) poor relationships with fellow students (5) appearance (6) blood shot eyes (7) fine motor tremors (8) confusion (9) deteriorating job performance.

2. The student will be asked to submit to an alcohol or drug screening test which will be immediate, or not later than two hours of the observed behavior, and will be accompanied to the test by a representative of William Paterson University student services.
3. The student will be removed from clinical laboratory activities pending results of the test(s). Test results will be sent to the Dean of the College of Science and Health or designee and the Director of Counseling, Health and Wellness Center, regardless of test results.
4. If a student is unwilling to produce the requested sample, the student will be allowed 30 minutes to reconsider the decision. Students who refuse to take the test after the 30 minutes waiting period will be treated as if the test result was positive.

### **If screening/confirmation tests are positive, students are advised of the following:**

1. New Jersey laws may require additional penalties beyond University sanctions for drug-related offenses.
2. A positive test result for drugs or alcohol, interpreted by the Medical Review Officer available through the testing laboratory contract will require student withdrawal and/or dismissal from the Nursing program at the discretion of the Dean and Chairperson of the Department of Nursing. Such sanctions shall be specified by a Review Panel charged with this function.
3. If the student is a Certified Nursing Assistant, an LPN or an RN, notification of a positive screening result will be sent to the New Jersey State Board of Nursing or other jurisdiction where the student is registered, certified, or licensed.

4. Dismissal from the program will be a joint decision made by a representative from Judicial Affairs, the Director of Counseling, Health and Wellness Center and the Chairperson of the Department of Nursing. If the student is not dismissed from the program, the student will not be permitted to participate in clinical until the student undergoes remediation (see below for remediation procedures).

**If the screening test is negative, the following applies:**

Absent of any further indications of impairment, the student may resume all clinical nurse course activities.

1. If the student again displays suspicious behaviors, an evaluation/assessment will be necessary to determine the risk potential for client/patient safety and student capacity for required role performance. The student will be referred for both a medical and psychological evaluation at the Counseling, Health and Wellness Center.
2. Until clearance for participation in clinical courses from the Counseling, Health and Wellness Center reports are received by the Chairperson of the Department of Nursing, the student cannot participate in any clinical course activities. The student is required to follow the recommendations included in such reports as a condition of resuming the clinical nursing course.

**REMEDATION FOR POSITIVE DRUG TESTING (Screening or Testing For A Cause)**

If the student is not immediately dismissed from the Department of Nursing following the joint review of the Judicial Affairs representative, the Director of the Counseling, Health and Wellness Center and the Chairperson of the Department of Nursing, the student will be required to undergo a professional evaluation by the Counseling, Health and Wellness Center. The Counseling, Health and Wellness Center will determine whether appropriate care can be provided on-site, or referred to a higher level of care at an alternate site (such as an inpatient treatment facility).

If referral to an external facility is deemed necessary by the Counseling, Health and Wellness Center, all costs are incurred by the student. Students must provide evidence of successful completion at the external facility to the Counseling, Health and Wellness Center. Upon successful completion of the treatment plan, the counselor shall conduct a follow-up evaluation and issue a report to the Dean and the Chairperson of the Department of Nursing. If the counselor reports that the student successfully completed the treatment plan and is ready to resume clinical, the student will be re-drug tested at the student's expense.

If the drug test is positive, the student will be dismissed from the Department of Nursing. If the drug test result is negative, the student may resume clinical course work depending on space availability. Once a student has resumed clinical activities, the student may be subject to random drug testing until graduation from the program.

Revised and Approved April 2015 by Faculty

## **Confidentiality**

The University will take reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of individual test results and the student's medical history. Drug and alcohol test results will be kept confidential to the extent possible, but the University will comply with applicable federal and state laws and regulations regarding the release of such information.

Adapted from parts of the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988 and the WPUNJ Workplace Policy, Yavapai College, Clifton, NJ High School, Morris Catholic High School, Nutley Board of Education, Purdue University School of Nursing, Clemson School of Nursing.

5/5/09 Reviewed by Counsel, DAG C. Clarke