

Impaired Practitioner Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Impaired Practitioner Program?

- The Impaired Practitioner Program is a confidential program designed to monitor the evaluation, treatment and recovery of health care professionals who have conditions that may impair their ability to practice without some type of intervention. Impairments monitored by the program include alcohol and drug dependence, mental health impairments, and physical impairments. Licensees who are regulated by the 19 professional boards within the Department of Public Health's professional licensure bureau are eligible for this program.
- The Impaired Practitioner Program is both an advocate for impaired licensees and a means to protect the health and safety of the public. The Impaired Practitioner Program is designed to assist licensees with successful recovery from or managing their impairment so that they may continue to safely practice their profession.
- Participation in the program is confidential, is not a matter of public record, and does not constitute disciplinary action. This means that, unlike licensee discipline, a licensee's participation in the program is not shared with the media, the public, or the licensee's employer. However, the monitoring requirements imposed by the program are similar to those requirements imposed by licensing boards in orders involving impairment issues.
- Licensees who are eligible for the program are asked to sign a contract which includes the terms under which the licensee will be monitored. The contract also provides that if a licensee violates the terms of the contract, their case file may be forwarded to their licensing board for possible disciplinary action.
- Participation in the Impaired Practitioner Program does not protect a licensee from board discipline for issues unrelated to the impairment. For example, competency and ethical violations discovered while a licensee is participating in the Impaired Practitioner Program would be investigated by the licensing board for possible disciplinary action.

2. How does a licensee apply to be involved with the Impaired Practitioner Program?

- Licensees can enter the program by either self-referral or board-referral.
- To complete a self-referral, a licensee must call or write the Impaired Practitioner Program at Impaired Practitioner Review Committee, Professional Licensure Bureau, Iowa Department of Public Health, East 12th and Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50319 or (515) 242-6385. Licensees must provide their name, contact information and known or suspected impairment. (see question 5)
- Board referrals are received by the Impaired Practitioner Program from the respective licensure board with the relevant contact and impairment information.

3. How does a licensee qualify for inclusion in the Impaired Practitioner Program?

- A licensee must meet all of the following criteria in order to be eligible for participation in the Impaired Practitioner Program:
 - The licensee must self-report to the Impaired Practitioner Program or be board-referred directly to the Impaired Practitioner Program.
 - The licensee must agree to undergo an evaluation at an Impaired Practitioner Program approved provider.
 - The licensee must not have engaged in unlawful diversion or distribution of controlled or illegal substances to a third party or for personal gain.

- At the time of self or board referral, the licensee must not already be under board order for an impairment.
- The licensee has not caused harm or injury to a client.
- The licensee must provide truthful information and fully cooperate with the Impaired Practitioner Program or the board.
- The licensee must consent to the conditions contained in the Impaired Practitioner Program contract.

4. What does “impairment” mean?

- Impairment for the purposes of the Impaired Practitioner Program is an inability to practice with reasonable safety and skill as a result of:
 - Alcohol or drug abuse, dependence, or addiction
 - Any neuropsychological or physical disorder or disability
- Impairment for the purposes of the Impaired Practitioner Program does not include:
 - sexual addiction
 - sexual compulsivity
 - paraphilia or other sexual disorders
 - gambling addiction

5. When is a licensee in the program?

- A licensee is considered to be in the program once a licensee contacts the Impaired Practitioner Program or the bureau, provides contact information and describes the impairment that may qualify them for the program, and signs an initial agreement or a contract.
- If a licensee contacts the Impaired Practitioner Program or the bureau and provides his or her name and information that he or she is impaired, the Impaired Practitioner Program is obligated to follow up on that information. If the licensee fails to cooperate with the Impaired Practitioner Program after providing this information, he or she may be referred to the licensing board for investigation.
- All board-referred licensees are considered in the program once referred unless the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee determines the licensee does not qualify for the program. In such cases the Impaired Practitioner Program will forward such information back to the licensee’s board for appropriate action.

6. What if a licensee refuses to participate in the impaired practitioner program once the program has personal contact and suspected impairment information?

- Refusal to participate in the program occurs when the licensee is not responding to correspondence in the manner requested or not signing an Impaired Practitioner Program contract for participation. Such refusal may result in the Impaired Practitioner Program forwarding the licensee’s information and any supporting information to the licensee’s board for follow-up and possible discipline.

7. What if the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee determines the licensee does not qualify for the program?

- Eligibility determination will typically occur after the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee receives a self-evaluation form from the licensee and reviews the report and supporting documentation.
- If the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee determines a licensee does not qualify for the program because the licensee is not impaired, the Impaired Practitioner Program will notify the licensee that he or she does not qualify for the program.
- If the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee determines a licensee is not eligible for the program because the licensee does not satisfy the eligibility criteria, the case may be referred to the licensing board for review and possible disciplinary action.

8. What happens once a licensee contacts the Impaired Practitioner Program or the bureau to complete a self-referral?

- Once contact information is obtained, licensees are sent self-report and release of information forms to complete and return. Required dates for return are included on all materials. Non-receipt of forms within required timeframes will be treated as a refusal to comply with program requirements and may result in referral to a licensee's board for review and disciplinary action.
- Licensees may be instructed to schedule an appointment with an Impaired Practitioner Program approved professional or facility for an evaluation to determine whether the licensee is impaired, and if so, to make recommendations for the licensee's treatment. The evaluation may take multiple hours to complete. The licensee pays for this assessment.
This assessment appointment must occur within a reasonable timeframe as defined by the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee. If the licensee does not schedule an evaluation or follow through with the evaluation, the licensee's information and materials received to date will be sent to the licensing board for review and possible discipline.
- Once the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee receives the evaluation from the approved evaluator, the recommendations are reviewed and are typically incorporated into a monitoring contract.
- The contract is created and sent to the licensee along with any applicable forms and releases needed by the Impaired Practitioner Program. Again time frames for returning forms are defined. If a licensee refuses to sign and return a contract, the licensee's information and materials received to date will be sent to the licensing board.

9. Once a licensee has signed a contract what type of monitoring is done?

- Licensees are required to sign a contract that puts in place the supports the licensee will need to successfully address their impairment. For example, a substance abuse contract may require that a licensee attend alcoholics anonymous, obtain an aftercare counselor, and obtain a worksite monitor.
- Monitors must agree to submit quarterly reports to the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee which contain information regarding the licensee's compliance with the terms of the Impaired Practitioner Program contract. This means that the licensee must share with the monitor the terms of the contract as well as a form that the monitor must sign agreeing to share information with the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee.
- All monitors must be approved by the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee and the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee can require changes if the monitor does not comply with reporting requirements. However, it is the responsibility of the licensee to make sure all forms and reports are submitted to the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee on time.

10. How long is the contract for?

- Licensees are generally required to sign a 4-year contract.

11. What are the costs associated with the Impaired Practitioner Program?

- The licensee pays for all costs associated with program participation. The Impaired Practitioner Program is not responsible for any costs incurred by the licensee as a part of the Impaired Practitioner Program.
- Costs may vary based on the impairment.
- Based on the impairment the following requirements may have costs a licensee will need to pay:
 - For a chemical/alcohol impairment or dual diagnosis impairment involving chemical/alcohol there may be 2 (or more) unannounced chemical screenings per month. The number of screens required may increase or decrease based on licensee compliance with the terms of the contract and the length of time the licensee has participated in the program.

- The Impaired Practitioner Program generally will require an initial independent evaluation for all licensees.
- At least once a year the licensee will be required to meet with the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee in Des Moines, Iowa. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the licensee's impairment, status, and program progress. The meeting would be scheduled during one of the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee's regular meetings. The licensee's appearance before the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee will be from thirty minutes to one hour. All licensee costs associated with the meeting, such as transportation, overnight lodging, and meals while away from home, are at the licensee's expense.
- Some licensee contracts for certain impairments may involve licensees being seen by physicians, counselors, psychiatrists or other health professional practitioners approved by the Impaired Practitioner Review Committee.