

What is the EMS Impaired Practitioner Program?

The EMS Impaired Practitioner Program is a confidential, voluntary alternative to formal disciplinary action for licensed EMS personnel who may be impaired due to the habitual or regular use of drugs and/or alcohol. DOH Regulation 7.27.2.13(F), NMSA 1978 provides the mechanism for which the EMS Bureau may establish and maintain a diversion program for chemically dependent Emergency Medical Technicians, Dispatchers and EMS First Responders. An EMT who habitually or regularly uses alcohol and/or drugs presents a potential danger to his/her patients because of the use of chemicals can impair an EMT's ability to safely practice. It is our wish that EMS personnel that are chemically dependent will recognize their illness, seek treatment, and accept admission into the EMS Impaired Practitioner Program.

What are the objectives of the EMS Impaired Practitioner Program?

- To ensure the health, safety and welfare of NM citizens.
- To identify chemically dependent EMS personnel or EMS personnel who are at risk for a chemically dependency before the disease progresses to the point where valuable EMTs are unable to practice because of the use of drugs and alcohol.
- To assist EMS personnel to get the necessary treatment needed to stop using drugs and alcohol.
- To keep recovering EMS personnel productive by helping them to remain in practice or to return to practice as soon as possible.
- To mentor the EMS personnel's practice and recovery to assure that the EMT is a safe practitioner.
- To educate the public and the EMS profession about chemical dependency.
- To reduce the problem of chemical dependence ion the EMS profession

What does the EMS Impaired Practitioner Program provide?

- Ongoing monitoring of the chemically dependent EMT.
- Consultation to employers regarding concerns of identification.
- Availability to consult with EMT's who are concerned about their own alcohol or drug use.
- Resources for counseling and drugs of abuse testing.
- Assists EMS personnel in the development of a relationship with AA, NA, or other 12-step support groups.
- Provides structure to ensure a safe work environment for the EMT in recovery.
- Maintains privacy for the EMT while actively involved in the monitoring program. Treatment providers and employers are actively involved in the monitoring process

Some signs and symptoms of Substance Abuse:

Alcohol Dependency

- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness.
- Irritability & mood swings, tendency to isolate.
- Elaborate excuses for behavior; unkempt appearance.
- Blackouts (temporary amnesia).
- Impaired motor coordination, slurred speech, flushed face, bloodshot eyes.
- Numerous injuries, burns, bruises, etc.
- Smell of alcohol on breath, excessive use of mouthwash or mints.
- Job shrinkage, minimum work done as necessary.

Drug Dependency

- Rapid mood and/or performance changes.
- Wears long sleeves at all times.
- Frequent absence from unit, frequent use of restroom.
- Excessive overtime, usually arriving early or staying late.
- Increased somatic complaints with an increase in pain medication prescriptions.

- Consistently signs out greater amounts of controlled drugs than anyone else; excessive drug wastage.
- Often medicates other's patients.
- Patients complain that pain medication is inadequate or they deny receiving it.
- Numerous discrepancies in signing and documentation procedure regarding controlled substances.