



Physician Assistant Impairment

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(Adopted 1990, amended 1992, reaffirmed 2004)

- (1) Physician assistants have a responsibility to protect patients and the public by identifying and assisting impaired colleagues who are unable to practice with reasonable skill and safety to patients because of physical or mental illness, including deterioration through the aging process or loss of motor skill, or excessive use or abuse of drugs, including alcohol.
- (2) As a first step in determining an appropriate course of action, physician assistants should refer to state laws and should seek the guidance of impairment committees established by state or local level professional societies.
- (3) Constituent chapters of the AAPA should establish impairment committees to assist PAs. The principal goals of the PA impairment committees should be to find competent professional help for the impaired PA and to serve as advocates for the restoration of that individual to patient care once he or she has satisfactorily completed a program of rehabilitation. These committees and any peer review processes that they implement must be confidential in nature, protecting the identity of the impaired PA and any records maintained on that individual. This may not be possible in states where law requires mandatory reporting. The committees are also encouraged to refer to the AAPA document, "Developing an Impairment Committee: A Guide for AAPA Constituent Chapters" and to establish communications with similar committees maintained by state medical societies.
- (4) Physician assistants should recognize impairment in physician supervisors and other health providers and should seek assistance from any or all of the resources mentioned above to encourage these individuals to obtain treatment.
- (5) Physician assistant continuing education and student programs through APAP should include components for education and prevention as well as identification and treatment of impaired practitioners/PAs.
- (6) AAPA endorses the establishment of support networks for recovering impaired PAs.