

Indicators of a Substance Use Disorder/Impairment

Please Note:

1. This list does not include all possible signs and symptoms of impairment.
2. Observing one or more warning signs may not be related to drug related behaviors or relapse.
3. However if the warning signs persist or there is a pattern of warning signs, this is an indication that the situation should be looked at closely.

Behavioral Signs:

- Mood swings/inappropriate anger
- Social isolation
- Hyperactive or over sedated/head nodding
- Frequent breaks and disappearance into the restroom
- Volunteers to give medications
- Requests to work evenings, nights and weekends when there is less activity and supervision.
- Excessive number of sick days.
- Absences without notification
- Arrives late or leaves early
- Problems interacting with peers and supervisors.
- Exhibits memory lapses or forgetfulness

Job Performance

- Mistakes made due to inattention, poor judgment, and bad decisions.
- Documentation problems; poorly written notes; charting errors.
- Increase in complaints from patients and families.
- Not meeting deadlines
- Sleeping on the job.

Appearance – Physical symptoms

- Flushed face
- Odor of Alcohol or cover-ups (sprays, mouthwash, etc.)
- Shakiness/Tremors
- Sweating
- Unsteady gait
- Weight loss or gain
- Dilated or constricted pupils; red eyes
- Change in dress- always wearing long sleeves
- Slurred speech

Other Workplace Observations

- Reports of excessive amounts of wasted narcotics.
- Patient complains of not receiving pain medications
- Patient documented as getting medication when he didn't need medication.
- Incorrect narcotic counts
- Apparent alteration of narcotic vials
- Discrepancies in physician's orders, progress notes, and narcotic records.