

Impaired Practitioner Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Impaired Practitioner Program (IPP)?

- The IPP 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 18 professional boards within the Department of Public Health's professional licensure bureau are eligible for this program.
- The IPP is both an advocate for impaired licensees and a means to protect the health and safety of the public. The IPP is designed to assist licensees with successfully recovering 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 IPP 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 IPP would be investigated by the licensing board for possible disciplinary action.

2. How does a licensee apply to be involved with the IPP?

- Licensees can become involved in the program by either self-referral or board-referral.
- To self refer, a licensee must call or write the IPP program at: Impaired Practitioner Review Committee, Professional licensure Bureau, Iowa Department of Public Health, East 12th and Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, Attention: Roxanne Sparks. Licensees must provide their name, contact information and known or suspected impairment. (see question 5)
- Board referrals are received by the IPP from the respective licensee board with the relevant contact and impairment information.

3. How does a licensee qualify for inclusion in the IPP?

- A licensee must meet all of the following criteria in order to be eligible for participation in the IPP:
 - The licensee must self-report to the IPP or be board-referred directly to the IPP.
 - The licensee must agree to undergo an evaluation at an IPP 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 IPP or the board.
 - The licensee must consent to the conditions contained in the IPP contract.

4. What does “impairment” mean?

- Impairment for the purposes of the IPP 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 IPP 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 IPP 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 IPP or the bureau and provides his or her name and information that he or she is impaired, the IPP is obligated to follow up on that information. If the licensee fails to cooperate with the IPP 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 (IPRC) determines the licensee does not qualify for the program. In such cases the IPP 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 (see question 5 above) in the program is identified by the licensee not responding to IPP correspondence in the manner requested or not signing an IPP contract for participation. Such refusal may result in the IPP forwarding the licensee’s information and any supporting information to the licensee’s board for follow-up and possible discipline.

7. What if the IPRC determines the licensee does not qualify for the program?

- Eligibility determination will typically occur after the IPRC receives a self-evaluation form from the licensee and reviews the report and supporting documentation.
- If the IPRC determines a licensee does not qualify for the program because the licensee is not impaired, the IPP will notify the licensee that he or she does not qualify for the program.
- If the IPRC 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 IPP or the bureau to self report?

- 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 (typically 7 days from date of letter) constitutes 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 IPP 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. Typical cost of such an evaluation may be in the range of \$300.00 to \$500.00 however may vary outside this range. This assessment appointment must occur within a reasonable timeframe as defined by the IPRC. 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 IPRC receives the evaluation from the approved evaluator, the recommendations are reviewed and are typically incorporated into a monitoring contract.
- The contract is drawn up and sent to the licensee along with any applicable forms and releases needed by the IPP. 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.

8. 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 IPRC which contain information regarding the licensee's compliance to the terms of the IPP 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 IPRC.

- All monitors must be approved by the IPRC and the IPRC 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 IPRC on time.

9. How long is the contract for?

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

10. What are the costs associated with the IPP?

- The licensee pays for all costs associated with program participation. The IPP is not responsible for any licensee costs incurred as a part of the IPP.
- Costs may vary based on the impairment.
- Based on the impairment the following provides some estimates of costs:
 - For a chemical/alcohol impairment or dual diagnosis impairment involving chemical/alcohol there may be 2 (or more) unannounced chemical screenings per month at an estimated cost of **\$51 per test taken** (date of estimated charge is February 2004) or if an ETG test is taken **\$65 per test taken**. 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 IPP generally will require an initial independent evaluation for all licensees. Estimates for this assessment are in the range of \$300 to \$500. However this cost is variable based on assessment services needed.
 - At least once a year the licensee will be required to meet with the IPRC in Des Moines, Iowa. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the licensee's impairment, status, progress and program. The meeting would be scheduled during one of the IPRC regular meetings. Generally the licensee's appearance before the IPRC would 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 IPRC. Costs for these visits cannot be estimated and will vary by practitioner and frequency of required visits. Licensees pay for all costs associated with these visits.
 - There are also transportation expenses involved in attending required alcoholic anonymous meeting or therapist/counseling/physician/professional visits where applicable that again will vary by contract. Such costs are to be paid by the licensee.