

POLICY L: Impaired Student

Impaired Studentⁱ

The University of Connecticut Health Center provides programs and services to students in the Schools of Medicine, Dental Medicine and the Graduate School who have psychological or substance use problems that may result in actions or behaviors that are dangerous to the student, their colleagues, the patients they interact with, or impair their ability to carry out their academic responsibilities.

A. Voluntary Confidential Assistance

Students who identify themselves as suffering from psychological illness may seek voluntary confidential counseling through the Student Mental Health Program. Students who identify themselves as having a substance use problem may seek voluntary confidential counseling through the CHIPS (Confidential Help for Impaired Professional Students) program (see attachment).

The Student Mental Health Program provides evaluation, crisis intervention and short-term therapy, and will refer the student to appropriate clinicians when medication may be required, or when long-term counseling is necessary. The student's record of care through the Student Mental Health Program is kept confidential.

The CHIPS program provides education and increased awareness of substance abuse, evaluation and treatment of students with alcohol or drug use problems, and on-going support and follow-up. The records of students who voluntarily use the CHIPS, and who comply with and successfully complete the treatment program are kept confidential.

B. Referred Confidential Assistance

Students may be referred to the Student Mental Health and CHIPS programs by faculty, staff, peers or family. When a student is referred to either program, the referring individual must indicate the reasons for that referral. The records of care of students referred to these program are kept confidential, provided they comply with and successfully complete the treatment program.

C. Mandated Confidential Assistance

School officialsⁱⁱ may mandate that a student undergo evaluation and treatment for psychological illness or substance use problems.

ⁱ The University of Connecticut Health Center Policy entitled "Drug Free Workplace and Alcohol Abuse Policy" applies to all Health Center employees as well as to students.

ⁱⁱ School of Medicine: The Associate Dean for Student Affairs, the Dean for Academic Affairs and Education, or the Academic Advancement Committee (AAC)

School of Dental Medicine: The Associate Dean for Student Affairs, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, or the Academic Performance Committees (APCs)

1. Mental Impairment

If a student is observed to be unable to perform their academic duties, or is a danger to himself/herself, patients, staff or colleagues, he/she may be removed from class/rotations and required to undergo evaluation by appropriate professionals (e.g., Student Mental Health Program). The student will not be allowed to return to class/rotation until cleared to do so by the professional, and will be required to participate in any prescribed long-term monitoring. Costs associated with these services are covered by the Student Health Plan.

Physician-patient confidentiality regarding clinical diagnosis and treatment will be maintained in mandated counseling and therapy. In order to return to class/rotation the student must sign a release to allow the therapist to share the following information with the appropriate school official.

- The date when the student may return to class/rotation.
- Any restrictions that may be required for participation in class/rotation.
- The need for on-going monitoring or treatment (*note*: The nature of the ongoing monitoring or treatment does not need to be reported. However, participation of the student in the monitoring and treatment program must be documented and reported).

The records of care of students who have been mandated by school officials to undergo evaluation and treatment will be kept in a confidential file, separate from the student's academic file.

2. Substance Abuse

Students suspected of, or found to be impaired due to substance abuse must participate in the CHIPS program (see attachment). Students who self-refer or are reported to CHIPS are typically sent for an assessment by an evaluator outside the Health Center. The evaluator submits a report and recommendations to the CHIPS Council. Based on that report, the CHIPS Council decides on a course of action that the student is expected to follow. If the student is removed from class/rotation, they will not be allowed to return to class/rotation until cleared to do so by the CHIPS program, and will be required to participate in any prescribed long-term monitoring. Costs associated with these services are covered by the Student Health Plan.

Physician-patient confidentiality regarding participation in the CHIPS program will be maintained in mandated counseling and therapy. In order to return to class/rotation the student must sign a release to allow the CHIPS program to share the following information with the appropriate school official.

Graduate School: The Associate Dean of the Graduate School

- The date when the student may return to class/rotation.
- Any restrictions that may be required for participation in class/rotation.
- The need for on-going monitoring or treatment (*note*: The nature of the on-going monitoring or treatment does not need to be reported. However, participation of the student in the monitoring and treatment program must be document and reported).

The records of care of students who have been mandated by school officials to undergo evaluation and treatment will be kept in a confidential file, separate from the student's academic file.

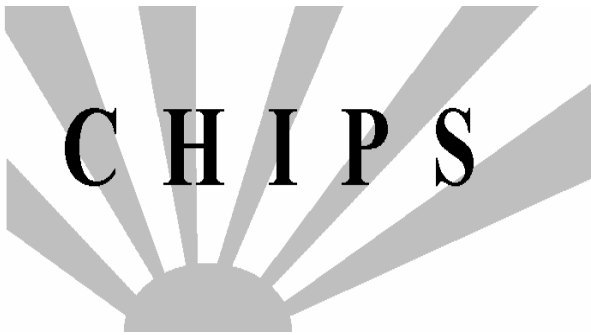
C. Failure of Treatment

If a student refuses evaluation or treatment for psychological illness or substance use problems, or fails to follow through appropriately on the recommended course of action, as determined by the CHIPS Council, after a warning to the student, the CHIPS Council will turn the matter over to the Dean of Students of the appropriate school. Similarly, if the student demonstrates non-compliance with the treatment plan, or if treatment will not likely lead to functional recovery, the Dean of Students of the appropriate school will be informedⁱⁱⁱ. Students so reported may be placed on a Leave of Absence, or dismissed from the school.

D. Appeal Process

When a student is required to undergo evaluation and treatment for psychological illness or substance use problems by a school official (see Section C), he/she shall have the right to appeal such action. Appeals will be heard by the Student Evaluation and Appeals Review Committee (SEARC). The process for initiating an appeal to the SEARC is outlined in "Student Appeals" section of the Student Handbook (see Section VII.C.).

ⁱⁱⁱ Determination of compliance to the treatment plan or if treatment will not likely result in functional recovery is made by the mental health professional (psychological illness), or the CHIPS Council (substance use problems).



Confidential Help for Impaired Professional Students

What is CHIPS?

The CHIPS (Confidential Help for Impaired Professional Students) Program is a resource available to all students to provide the following:

- Education and increased awareness of substance abuse
- Evaluation and treatment of persons having problems with alcohol or other drugs
- On-going support and follow-up
- Advocacy for continuing professional education without stigma or penalty

Why the CHIPS Program?

Impairment among healthcare professionals can be a significant problem. While we all have problems of a personal nature from time to time, sometimes outside help may be needed. For example, unhealthy coping responses could show themselves in impaired performance, failing grades, or interpersonal conflicts, to mention a few.

A Few Words About Impairment...

Sometimes students use alcohol or drugs to cope with the stresses of professional school. The impaired student is one whose drinking or drug use interferes with his or her ability to function according to accepted academic, professional or social standards.

How Do You Use CHIPS?

Self referrals are encouraged. Usually, the impaired student will not voluntarily seek help but the impairment may be observed by a classmate, faculty member and or a friend. The reporting individual will relate the details of the situation to a CHIPS Council member. This CHIPS Council representative will review the situation and bring it to the entire Council to determine the best plan of action. The identity of the student will remain anonymous to the Council.

What is the Cost of CHIPS?

There is no cost to you for the CHIPS program. If you are referred for services such as individual therapy or a treatment program, the cost may be covered by your student health insurance plan.

How Does CHIPS Work?

The early intervention process of CHIPS begins with a meeting with a representative of the Council to assess, in a helpful and supportive way, the concern of possible impairment. The meeting will be conducted with one student representative and one faculty representative from the CHIPS Council. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the concern that a problem may exist, to express a commitment to help, and to explain the evaluation and treatment resources available.

A referral is usually made for an assessment of the problem. If treatment is recommended, the student will be provided with several options. The assessment and treatment are provided outside the UConn Health Center, and most options are covered by the student health plan. Throughout the process, CHIPS will provide support and advocacy as needed.

The CHIPS Program is Confidential

The success of the CHIPS Program is based on student trust and a belief that confidentiality is of the utmost importance. CHIPS is designed to protect both the impaired student and those students who report an impaired colleague. Typically, only two CHIPS Council representatives will know the identity of the person who enters the program. All efforts will be made to assure that a person in the program will not have their education and career opportunities adversely affected. When studies have been interrupted, the CHIPS Program will assist the student in making arrangements for resuming and completing his or her education.

Through the CHIPS Program we can fulfill our duty to protect patients and others, while still compassionately caring for the well-being of our colleagues.

Failure of Treatment

Only if the student refuses treatment, has demonstrated poor compliance, or it does not appear that the treatment will lead to full recovery, will the Council inform the appropriate Dean of Student Affairs regarding the student's situation. In those instances evaluation and final disposition is a judgment which resides with the Dean of the respective school, to be made in accordance with existing policies and procedures.

Web-site

Check out the CHIPS website. It can be found under 'organizations' on the School of Medicine home page.

