A5-16: An Overview of Alternative to Discipline Programs for Nurses from Across the United States

Author List:
Presenting Author: Mike Van Doren
Additional Author: Phyllis A. Tipton

Presenting Author: Mike Van Doren
Address: 2200 Kimra Lane
Cedar Park, Texas 78613
United States
Ph: 512.467.7027
Fax:
Email: mvandoren@texasnurses.org
Institution: Texas Peer Assistance Program for Nurses

Additional Author: Phyllis A Tipton
Address: 2501 S. 31
Temple, Texas 76508
United States
Ph: 2547244764
Fax: 2547241756
Email: phtipton@swmail.sw.org
Institution: Scott and White

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Abstract:
Introduction: The purpose of this study was to identify the similarities and differences in referral practices of alternative to discipline programs (ADPs) for nurses from across the United States. An ADP provides nurses with substance abuse or mental illness issues the chance to obtain treatment and monitoring instead of receiving disciplinary licensure board action.

Method(s): A 25 item survey was sent to program directors of 41 ADP programs from across the nation. Items on the survey were determined by two nurses experienced with ADPs. The survey was reviewed by ADP nurse case managers. A pilot survey was conducted with non-nursing allied health professionals ADP program directors who completed the survey to determine clarity of items.
Results: A total of 21 ADPs returned the survey. All 21 ADPs accepted individuals with the diagnosis of chemical dependency. Twelve also worked with psychiatric disorders referrals and eight reported accepting referrals for physical or medical diagnoses. The majority of the ADPs accept referrals from third parties, self, or from the licensing board. Eleven ADPs reported some type of licensing board involvement in the referral process. The referral rate for all ADPs was less than 1% of nurses licensed within a state.

Discussion & Conclusions: Considering the estimated rate of substance use disorder (SUD) among nurses is between 6 to 20%, the referral rate of less than 1% indicates many nurses with SUD are not receiving adequate support and monitoring. Since there was no discernable pattern that licensing board involvement made a difference in referral rate, further studies are needed to determine best ADP referral practices. The wide variations in referral practices among ADPs indicate the need for health care professionals to come to agreement for determining appropriate and effective ADP policies and practices.

Abstract History:
This abstract has been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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Submitted by:
phtipton@swmail.sw.org