



Wellness and Peer Assistance in Washington State – May 2007

What You Need to Know

This is the 4th anniversary of the AANA Wellness Initiative, which began as a memorial to Past President Jan Stewart, CRNA, ARNP. It has become an outstanding success assisting AANA members in dealing with alcohol and chemical dependency issues. The Peer Assistance Committee has been asked by a number of WANA members about services and options offered to our membership by our state association and Washington State. Fortunately, WANA has had an active Peer Assistance Committee for several decades and has worked closely with the Washington Health Professional Services (WHPS), a confidential program that provides a protected environment for treating the disease of chemical dependency.

Washington State nurses are fortunate that the state legislature authorized the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NQAC) to provide nurses an alternative to discipline for cases of chemical dependency. The “alternative” is *diversion to a state-approved chemical dependency program*. This is where WHPS steps in to help the chemically dependent professional. This individual has several options, while still protecting the RN/ARNP license:

1. Self-referral to aid in early treatment of a recognized dependency problem.
2. Referral by employer, family, friends or colleagues.
3. Referral by a licensing/discipline authority.

In every case, the nursing license is protected, as long as the individual engages in the supervised treatment and contract requirements of WHPS. Alcohol and chemical dependency does not need to destroy or end any nursing career. It is a treatable disease just like diabetes or any other systemic diseases.

There are several options for WANA members to get help and/or information:

1. For immediate help, call the WANA Peer Assistance Advisors
Frank Maziarski, CRNA, MS
H 206-364-7980 / C 206-940-3403 / email morphia@att.net
Lily Paull, CRNA, MAE
H 425-485-0241 / P 206-469-3280 / email lkp2@comcast.net
2. Washington Health Professional Services (WHPS)
Jean Sullivan, Executive Director
PO Box 47872, Olympia, WA 98504-7872
Office 360-236-2880 / C 206-999-9686
Ask for “A Guide for Assisting Colleagues Who Demonstrate Impairment in the Workplace”
3. AANA Peer Assistance Hot Line: **800-654-5167**
4. If the problem is life threatening, **call 911** or go to the nearest emergency room for treatment.
5. Suicide Hotline: **800-273-TALK**

The AANA website is also a valuable resource. Log onto www.aana.com and look to the left side of the home page, click “Resources,” then click “Wellness and Peer Assistance.” You will have access to a vast amount of information, telephone numbers and Internet links.

Remember, chemical dependency is a disease. One out of ten health professionals experiences a problem with drugs or alcohol over the course of their career. Treatment is available and confidential. Ask for help if you need it.