

# **"Understanding RNP"**

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**RECOVERING NURSE PROGRAM**

## **INTRODUCTION TO RNP**

The Louisiana State Board of Nursing implemented the **Recovering Nurse Program(RNP)**, originally named LaNNIP(Louisiana Nurses Network for Impaired Professionals), on July 1, 1986, to identify and assist nurses registered and licensed by the Board whose capacity to practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety to patients has been, or may potentially be, compromised by:

- chemical dependency/abuse issues,
- mental health conditions or
- medical/physical condition that may prevent the nurse from providing safe patient care.

Such nurses have the opportunity to voluntarily enlist and participate in effective rehabilitative medical treatment and ongoing aftercare and monitoring; and to allow for the deferral of formal investigation and administrative prosecution of such nurses under the Louisiana Nursing Practice Law, LA. Rev. Stat. 37:911-933.

The cornerstone of the RNP is *abstinence* from **ALL** mood-altering chemicals/drugs. The Recovering Nurse Program subscribes to the *disease theory of addiction* and recognizes that chemical dependency is a chronic and progressive disease, which can be treated, but cannot be cured. The goal of RNP is to assist the Registered Nurse in developing and maintaining long-term sobriety, thus protecting the public and self.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE RECOVERING NURSE PROGRAM**

- Ensure the health and safety of the public through a program that closely monitors nurses impaired by alcohol and/or other chemicals.
- Promote safe nursing care by preventing or restricting the practice of those temporarily unable to deliver safe nursing care.
- Establish criteria and implement a plan for appropriate identification and referral of impaired nurses.
- Develop and maintain criteria for identification of acceptable treatment programs.

- Provide a structured program for nurses seeking recovery from impairment in a therapeutic, non-punitive and confidential process.
- Provide educational programs to the health care community related to the identification and intervention of chemical dependency problems, subsequent treatment alternatives and monitoring.

### **REFERRALS TO THE RNP PROGRAM**

A nurse can be referred to the RNP by: (1) self-referral; (2) employer referral; (3) family, friend, or colleague referral and/or (4) State Board of Nursing referral. It is essential that nursing colleagues fulfill their responsibility in reporting impaired or potentially impaired nurses to the RNP. The Nurse Practice Act, specifically 37:931, provides for civil immunity from civil liability for persons or institutions that report information to the Board without malice and with reasonable belief that such information is accurate.

### **CONFIDENTIAL RNP**

A Registered Nurse who meets the criteria of being chemically dependent and agrees to comply with all of the RNP program specifications is eligible to enter the program by signing a **five-year** program agreement. A confidential RNP agreement provides enrollment into the RNP program that is non-disciplinary, not public record and will not be published in the LSBN Nurse Examiner; however, the employer and other licensing Boards have a right to know of the participants' enrollment in the RNP. (Except as authorized by the RNP participant, in response to inquiry by the nursing licensing authority of another state or by an employer by which the participant is employed or to which the participant has applied for employment or pursuant to the lawful order of a court of competent jurisdiction, the records, files and information of the RNP relative to the participant shall be maintained in confidence and will not be disclosed to any other person, firm or entity). If a participant signs a *disciplinary* RNP agreement, "participation in the RNP is not confidential and is a matter of public record." ***All RNP participants are required to keep the confidential information of other RNP participants private.***

## **CONFIDENTIAL RNP ELIGIBILITY**

- Must be a registered nurse licensed in Louisiana and residing in Louisiana *or* a graduate of a school of nursing and eligible for licensure in Louisiana *or* a RN currently enrolled in a peer assistance program or an alternative program requesting endorsement from another state.
- Voluntarily requests admission to RNP whether referred by self or others.
- Is chemically dependent or abuses alcohol and/or drugs (legal or illegal) or has a mental or physical condition, which impairs or potentially impairs the ability of the nurse or student nurse to perform duties safely.
- No previous disciplinary action by the Board within the past two (2) years. No previous peer assistance/alternative program participation unless first relapse uncomplicated by previous history.
- No criminal conviction or pending criminal charge that requires disciplinary action by the Board.
- No diversion of chemicals for the purpose of sale or distribution. No dealing Or selling of illicit drugs.
- No co-occurring, untreated physical, emotional or psychiatric problem which would impair nursing competency.
- No related nursing problems involving death or significant harm to patient.

(Nurses are **not eligible** for Confidential RNP if they have been previously disciplined by the Board, have been terminated previously from the RNP program or any other diversion program for non-compliance, sold drugs or have caused significant patient harm or death).