



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT RECOVERY PROGRAM

For information or assistance, call any time: 1.800.522.9198

Mission Statement

The Physician Assistant Recovery Program exists to support the rehabilitation and safe reintegration of California's licensed physician assistants whose wellness and ability to practice safely have been impacted by substance abuse or mental health challenges.

Do I Need Help?

If you're questioning whether you need help for a mental health or substance use issue, there's a good chance you would benefit from support. These challenges tend to grow over time, becoming more serious and difficult to address when not recognized early. It's often difficult to maintain perspective when you're close to the problem. Delayed or misdirected efforts can increase stress and frustration, making the situation feel overwhelming. For physician assistants, unaddressed substance abuse or mental health concerns can impair one's professional judgment and put at risk one's career, and, even worse, one's life.

You're Not Alone...

Substance use-related and mental health challenges are growing concerns in the physician assistant medical profession.



10% to 15% of healthcare professionals engage in substance abuse at some point in their careers.



A survey conducted between 2022 and 2023 revealed that 26% of U.S. healthcare workers reported symptoms of mental illness. Among those who reported symptoms, only 20% sought treatment.



A 2023 study found that 84.4% of physician assistant students reported feelings of anxiety, and 80.9% reported feelings of depression during their education. These rates are significantly higher than those in the general population, with anxiety levels 65.3% higher and depression levels 72.5% higher among physician assistant students.

Physician assistants face long hours, high emotional demands, exposure to trauma, and the pressure to appear resilient. Easy access to controlled substances, stigma around seeking help, and concerns about professional consequences make it even

more difficult to reach out. These factors contribute to a heightened risk of burnout, anxiety, depression, and substance use disorders. A dedicated, confidential recovery program provides a critical lifeline—offering support, structured monitoring, and access to treatment while preserving careers and, ultimately, protecting public safety through rehabilitation rather than punishment.

Who Provides the Service?

The California Department of Consumer Affairs Physician Assistant Board contracts with Premier Health Group (PHG) to provide confidential assessment, referral, and monitoring services for the Recovery Program. PHG is a multidisciplinary behavioral health organization committed to reducing the negative impact of addiction and mental illness on California communities.

Who Can Refer to the Program?

The Recovery Program accepts voluntary referrals. Any licensed physician assistant experiencing substance abuse or mental health-related concerns may seek assistance by calling the 24-hour toll-free number. Most individuals experiencing these challenges ultimately wish they had sought support sooner—before things escalated personally or professionally.

All voluntary requests for help are strictly confidential, except in cases where a participant is board-referred, in which case updates about progress during enrollment are shared with the Physician Assistant Board. Individuals are scheduled for a confidential clinical assessment with a licensed professional, during which a monitoring plan is developed. If clinically appropriate, treatment recommendations are also made. Voluntary participants may be assured that their information will be kept confidential and shared only with the Recovery Program team, the Physician Assistant Board, and the contracted testing vendor unless disclosure is necessary due to a risk of harm to self or others.



Pathways To The Recovery Program

Physician assistants may voluntarily request admission to the program or shall be accepted into the program in accordance with terms and conditions resulting from a disciplinary action with the Board. In addition, the program accepts physician assistants who are referred by employers, friends, or family.

How to Obtain Services

If you are struggling—or if you live or work with a physician assistant who is—call the Recovery Program toll-free at (800) 522-9198, available 24 hours a day.

Sources

Baldisseri M. R. (2007). Impaired healthcare professional. *Critical care medicine*, 35(2 Suppl), S106-S116. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.CCM.0000252918.87746.96>

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Van Beusekom, M. (2025, January 17). 1 in 4 US healthcare workers report mental distress during COVID, survey suggests. CIDRAP. <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/1-4-us-healthcare-workers-report-mental-distress-during-covid-survey-suggests>