

NEBRASKA LICENSEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A SERVICE OF BEST CARE EAP

AFTER TREATMENT, AFTERCARE

Sobriety and recovery can be a new concept to recovering health service professionals, their families, and their colleagues. Sometimes there are misconceptions and fears accompanied by unreasonable expectations of the involved parties. It is important to have patience with recovering individuals and to become familiar with the recovery process in order to be able to provide positive support.

One very important aspect of an ongoing recovery after primary treatment is continuing care, also known as aftercare. Each professional develops his/her own aftercare plan prior to discharge from a residential, inpatient, or intensive outpatient substance use treatment program to ensure a successful recovery. An important component of this plan is weekly in-person attendance at professionally facilitated aftercare meetings. Weekly attendance provides the recovering health services professional an opportunity to continue to address primary recovery issues and continue to develop relapse prevention skills, especially those that are unique to health service professionals.

Many studies have confirmed the importance of weekly aftercare meetings to establish a successful long-term recovery. Aftercare meetings are now available online; however, in-person programs are still recommended by the Nebraska Licensee Assistance Program (NE LAP) for health service professionals who need to have the highest level of accountability to achieve sustained recovery.

Attendance at ongoing aftercare meetings can be a measure of the strength of the health service professional's commitment to recovery. The NE LAP recommends attendance at a minimum of six months of aftercare if the primary treatment was an intensive outpatient treatment program, and a minimum of one year of aftercare if the primary treatment was a residential or inpatient treatment program. History has shown that if attendance at weekly aftercare meetings declines, the commitment to one's recovery also declines, exponentially increasing the risk for relapse.

An established aftercare plan for a health service professional usually includes counseling and regular attendance at recovery program meetings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Licensee Support Group (Omaha), SMART Recovery, or Celebrate Recovery.

It is important that the aftercare plan for a health service professional takes into account the unique issues related to public safety, practice demands, and personal recovery needs. A well-developed aftercare plan provides a clear and specific outline of expected recovery activities and allows for the monitoring of a successful recovery process. Ongoing monitoring of aftercare progress can help the health service professional achieve a sustained recovery, and ensure a safe and successful practice for the individual, their colleagues, and the public.

If you are a licensed health or health-related service professional wanting more information about sobriety and recovery, please contact the NE LAP at (800) 851-2336 or (402) 354-8055 or visit our web site at www.lapne.org. If you would like to consult with the NE LAP, or schedule an assessment or an educational presentation, please ask for Judi Leibrock, NE LAP Coordinator, or Michelle Hruska, NE LAP Counselor.

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