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## Common Warning Signs

The presence of the following signs can identify an individual whose health or performance may be impaired. Even if you are not certain a problem exists, it is important to contact the Physician Health Committee for assistance.

### Attitude/Behavior Changes

- Rapidly turns from compassionate and caring to abrupt/caustic
- Withdraws from friends and activities
- Becomes mistrusting, anxious, depressed, irritable

### Physical Changes

- Loss of appetite or reduced level of exercise
- Looks tired; admits to insomnia
- Personal hygiene deteriorates
- Physical problems are self-treated

### Performance Changes

- Misses appointments
- Makes rounds at unusual hours
- Can't be reached when on call
- Sloppy charting
- Smell of alcohol on breath during the day

### Relationship Changes

- Family communication deteriorates
- Frequent arguments, spouse blamed
- Occurrence of spouse, child abuse
- Children may exhibit poor school performance
- Jealousy, infidelity leading to separation, divorce



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# Concerned about the well-being of a doctor?

The Rhode Island Medical Society  
offers confidential and effective  
help for troubled physicians.



The Physician Health Committee of the Rhode Island Medical Society has helped hundreds of physicians, dentists, podiatrists and physician assistants address personal problems that can compromise professional performance.

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### **What is the Physician Health Committee?**

It is a medical peer review committee maintained voluntarily by the Rhode Island Medical Society since 1978. As a peer review body, the Committee enjoys the strong protection of both Rhode Island and federal law for the confidentiality of its work.

### **What does the Committee do?**

The Committee helps identify and resolve individual doctors' problems in these areas:

- Substance abuse
- Psychiatric illness (for example, depression)
- Medical illness (for example, organic brain syndrome)
- Disruptive behavior
- Sexual boundary violations

### **How does the program work?**

Reports of problems are evaluated and, if warranted, an intervention is conducted. The physician may be referred for evaluation and treatment. The recovering physician is monitored and supported through a long-term aftercare contract with the Committee.

The Committee serves as an active advocate before licensing authorities, hospital staffs, HMO's, etc. for the physician who is successful in addressing the presenting problem.

### **Who are the members of the Committee?**

They are practicing Rhode Island physicians, dentists, podiatrists and physician assistants, as well as resident physicians.

### **Is there someone from my community on the Committee?**

Probably. The Committee tries to include at least one member from each hospital medical staff in the state. A current list of Committee members is available at [www.rimed.org/physician-health-program.asp](http://www.rimed.org/physician-health-program.asp).

### **What are the chances of success?**

They are excellent. In the area of substance abuse, about 85% to 90% of program participants recover. The program's record of success is similarly encouraging for other conditions.

### **Would the Committee ever report anyone to authorities without consent?**

Rarely. It would happen only if patients were in imminent danger and the doctor was uncooperative. Otherwise, confidentiality is absolute.

### **Does the Committee charge for its services?**

No. If professional evaluation and treatment are indicated, payment to those who provide these services may be covered wholly or partially by health insurance. (The Committee provides referrals for evaluation and treatment; it does not perform the evaluations or provide treatment.)

### **Who can make referrals to the Committee?**

Anyone. The Committee accepts self-referrals as well as referrals from practice partners, hospital medical staffs, family members, patients, friends or anyone else who may have a concern.

### **What about medical students?**

Medical students are not under the purview of the Physician Health Program. However, the Medical Student Health Council of the Brown Medical School is advised and supported by members and staff of the Physician Health Committee. The Rhode Island Medical Society provides the Student Health Council with space for its meetings and secure storage for its records.

**For more information or to make a referral, please call the Program Director, Rosemary Maher, ACSW, LICSW, at 401-528-3287 or Herbert Rakatansky, MD, Chair of RIMS Physician Health Committee at 401-354-9196.**



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*Physicians caring for Rhode Islanders since 1812.*