



STATEMENT ON DRUG TESTING FOR TRANSPORT NURSES

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BACKGROUND

The Federal Administration, in 1986, proposed mandatory drug testing of all Federal employees for illegal drug use through the Executive Order 12564. A Presidential order required that all federal agencies must implement a plan to establish a “drug-free workplace”. There has been a significant increase in the number of private employers who have instituted drug testing programs for their employees. In 1989, the Federal Aviation Administration required that employers in the aviation industry establish anti-drug programs and establish procedures that employers must follow when conducting drug testing. (49 CFR 40). Although medical crew members are not considered part of the crew as defined by the FAA, ASTNA supports that transport programs follow the same guidelines.

Nurses, paramedics, respiratory therapist, physicians, flight crew members, aircraft dispatchers and aircraft maintenance are subject to drug testing because of their professional responsibilities, their contact with narcotics and other controlled substances, and the recognized occupational hazard of substance abuse.

ASSOCIATION POSITION

The Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association (ASTNA) has issued a position statement concerning drug testing for healthcare in the following situations.

1. ASTNA supports drug screening of healthcare applicants and incumbent personnel. This is part of the pre-employment process and the right of the employers. Guidelines must be established and uniformly and fairly administered as outlined in accordance with the FAA and DOT guidelines for the anti-drug/alcohol program.
2. ASTNA supports random drug and alcohol testing when there is reasonable suspicion and objective data that job performance is or has been impaired by drug or alcohol usage. Objective criteria include belligerence, inability to work in a cooperative manner with supervisors and other staff members, inability to carry out instructions, excessive tardiness, absenteeism, and unsatisfactory job performance. Additionally, any employee who is associated with a controlled medication that has



been tampered with or is missing can be reasonably be subjected to testing, as can one with any work related injury.

3. ASTNA supports the use of random drug and alcohol drug screening as part of a recognized treatment program for substance abuse.
4. ASTNA supports the suspension of transport duties until further investigation is complete, should there be a positive result.
5. ASTNA supports the termination of any flight crew member who refuses to submit to an alcohol or drug test when indicated as described above.

Employers must provide managers and supervisors with specific and objective guidelines for establishing of reasonable suspicion of drug impaired job performance.

Once an objective and reasonable suspicion has been documented, the employee should be informed and asked to sign a consent. The process must be fairly and consistently applied. The healthcare member must be treated in a manner to ensure personal dignity while preserving the legal rights of the employee.

The lab must ensure integrity of the specimen, confidentiality of the results and the ability to repeat the test should there be a dispute in the results. This includes the ability to retest within 72 hours after notification of a positive result.

ASTNA also supports that, should a test be positive, counseling and treatment resources should be provided. Individuals who self report and seek treatment prior to being identified through drug testing procedures should be removed from transport status and placed on a leave of absence if rehabilitation is deemed appropriate by the management team.

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