

# Identifying Substance Use Disorders (National Council State Boards of Nursing)



## Behavioral Signs

- Tends to administer more medications, always uses the maximal dose
- Volunteers to give medications
- Demonstrates patterns of excessive wastage and breakage
- Increasing discrepancies in management of controlled substances
- Complaints from patients reporting ineffectiveness of pain medication
- Requests to work evenings, nights, weekends when there is generally less activity and less supervision
- Exhibits increased anxiety, sudden mood swings, inappropriate anger or crying
- Demonstrates problems interacting with peers and supervisors
- Exhibits forgetfulness or memory lapses
- Makes frequent trips to the bathroom or has other unexplained absences
- Demonstrates patterns of absenteeism, tardiness, and sick calls especially following days off
- Sloppy or illogical documentation

## Physical Signs

- Shakiness, tremors of the hands
- Slurred speech
- Falling asleep
- Watery eyes, dilated or constricted pupils
- Diaphoresis
- Unsteady gait or staggering
- Runny nose
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Weight loss or gain
- Change in dress or grooming (i.e., suddenly wears long sleeves/lab coats)