

# West Virginia Medical Professionals Health Program

## “Up and Running”

On January 14, 2008 the West Virginia Medical Professionals Health Program (WVMPHP) signed an agreement with the West Virginia Board of Medicine to allow for the enrollment of physicians, podiatrists and physician assistants with substance abuse or major mental illness. Participation is on a voluntary basis without such practitioners being subject to disciplinary action by the Board provided the practitioner complies with the goals and restrictions of the program and have no formal complaints filed against them with their licensing board. The Board may also refer practitioners to the WVMPHP which may have been or are going to be subject to disciplinary action. This significant event exemplifies both parties recognition of the public interest, health, safety and welfare which is best served by the existence of such a program. It also reflects the mutually symbiotic relationship necessary for the early identification and assistance of practitioners who are in need of good healthcare and recovery services. The primary function of the WVMPHP is to monitor compliance as dictated by treatment professionals and/or Boards of licensure. Components of this long term monitoring include a referral for evaluation and/or treatment, frequent and random urine screens, support group meetings, regular doctor visits, work-site monitoring, advocacy to appropriate parties, and documentation of compliance with program requirements. A similar

agreement is being discussed with the West Virginia Board of Osteopathy.

This signing of the agreement brings to light a multi-year endeavor by organized medicine to provide assistance to the “sick healthcare provider” and thereby better protecting the public. In addition to the direct services to practitioners in need, the WVMPHP is committed to educating the healthcare community throughout the state. This will include not only education related to the function and availability of the WVMPHP, but also the disease of addiction and other issues of physician well-being. Currently, we are planning presentations before county medical societies, schools of medicine and hospital medical staff meetings.

Information about a professionals’ participation in the program is confidential. Practitioners who enter the program as “self-referrals” without a complaint filed against them remain unknown to their licensing board provided they are compliant with the program’s requirements.

A physician, podiatrist, physician assistant, hospital or other interested party may call the voluntary, confidential program to obtain more information at 304-414-0400. In the case of a referral for services the staff of the WVMPHP will meet with the applicant and refer appropriately for evaluation and treatment based on individual needs. Hospitals, colleagues and others can receive verification of enrollment by requesting the

applicant/participant give the program permission to inform the desired hospital or colleague.

The Board of Directors of the WVMPHP are made up of representatives of organized medicine including: The West Virginia Society of Osteopathic Medicine; The West Virginia State Medical Association; The West Virginia Mutual Insurance Company; The West Virginia Podiatric Medical Association; The West Virginia Hospital Association; The West Virginia Society of Addiction Medicine; The West Virginia Association of Physician Assistants; and includes one citizen member elected by the Board.

The WMPHP officers and staff include: Dr. Joseph Selby, Chairman; Mr. Bruce Martin CIC, Vice-Chairman/Executive Director; Dr. Elizabeth Spangler, Secretary/Treasurer, Dr. P. Bradley Hall, Medical Director and L. Renee Green, R.N., Case Management Director. There are many other individuals who have been involved or are involved inside and outside of organized medicine that have helped bring such an important service to the state of West Virginia.

Our mission statement and underlying principles further defines our commitment to the well-being of West Virginia’s healthcare professionals and the public at large.

### MISSION STATEMENT

*To protect healthcare consumers through seeking the early identification and rehabilitation of physicians,*



surgeons, and other healthcare professionals with potentially impairing health concerns including abuse of mood altering drugs including alcohol, mental illness or physical illness affecting competency so that physicians, surgeons, and other healthcare professionals so afflicted may be treated, monitored and returned to the safe practice of their profession to the benefit of the healthcare profession and the patients we serve.

## PRINCIPLES

1. Addictive Disorders (i.e. Chemical Dependency/Alcohol Dependency) and Mental Illness are primary diseases and as such the addicted/mentally ill patient needs treated with the same standards of care provided patients who suffer from other chronic medical illnesses.
2. The program is committed to the health of the addicted/mentally ill healthcare professional, their families, their healthcare community, and the public community at large.
3. The addicted/mentally ill healthcare professionals who pose a danger to patients must be reported to their Board of Licensure of the State of West Virginia.
4. Program participants who enter the WVMPHP as self referrals without a complaint filed against them and remain compliant with all program requirements should remain unknown to the enforcement program of their licensure board.
5. Drug or alcohol dependency and physical/mental disorders among healthcare professionals should be addressed by the medical community and regulatory agencies proactively rather than reactively.
6. Healthcare professionals with potentially impairing conditions are obliged to accept help and cooperate with evaluation, treatment, and monitoring in order to regain or retain their full effectiveness to practice their profession.
7. The addicted/mentally ill healthcare professional should not be disciplined merely on the basis of diagnosis and that to do so would impede their own recovery and limit WVMPHP's effectiveness.
8. Potentially impairing illness may be suspected based on the observation and evaluation of peers knowledgeable about these issues and/or by the acknowledgement or admission of the professional and should be confirmed by an industry recognized and professionally reliable evaluation process.
9. It is the responsibility of all healthcare professionals to be aware of any colleague's chemical dependency and/or mental illness and to assist these colleagues in receiving appropriate referral for evaluation, treatment, and monitoring.
10. The program does not discriminate nor deny services based on specialty, medical professional degree, membership affiliations, age, race, religion, sex, national origin, or financial well-being.
11. The WVMPHP's staff is passionate, energetic, available, dedicated, and knowledgeable through experience and/or training in carrying out the mission of the program.
12. The WVMPHP is committed to expanding the knowledge to the healthcare community as a whole with regard to the principles of the program and other issues of physician well-being through the promotion of educational opportunities to be made available to health professionals around the state.
13. The program is committed to having open, active lines of communication between all parties involved in carrying out its mission and to earning the respect and trust of medicine and the regulatory bodies through honest, direct, and professional interactions aimed toward our common interests.
14. The operation of the program and treatment of addicted/mentally ill healthcare professionals is more cost effective than the training of new healthcare professionals.
15. WVMPHP is a positive example of organized medicine and the regulatory entities working cooperatively toward their shared vision of ensuring the health of its members and the safety and welfare of the patients we serve.
16. WVMPHP is committed to operate its business in a fiduciary manner consistent with established standards for a 501 (c) 3.

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE - MAKE A DONATION:

**The WVMPHP is funded through contributions made by the WV Mutual Insurance Company, in-kind donations from the WVSMA, and donations from physicians.**

We are currently instituting a "Capital Campaign" which you can expect to hear more about soon.

While ongoing funding sources are considered and implemented, please help us make the WVMPHP be the success we know it can be. "Founding Sponsors" who contribute \$1000.00 or more will be recognized in WVMPHP's annual report and will receive a plaque acknowledging their role in establishing this much needed program. The WVMPHP expects to receive 501(c) 3 designation as a qualifying charity and you will be provided appropriate documentation for your tax records.

**P. Bradley Hall, MD**

*Medical Director, WV Medical  
Professionals Health Program*

*President, WV Society of Addiction Medicine*