



Strengthening Workforce Resilience and Patient Care Through Support for Health Professionals

Chris Bundy, MD, MPH

Executive Medical Director, Washington Physicians Health Program

For more than 35 years, the Washington Physicians Health Program (WPHP) has been Washington's trusted resource for restoring the health of medical professionals. Our program is designed to provide confidential, therapeutic support for health professionals facing mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and other medical conditions that could adversely impact safe practice. In some cases, brief assessment and referral to services are all that is needed to support health and put concerns at rest. In other cases, more help is needed and WPHP is ready to assist.

WPHP recently published our [2024 Annual Report](#) which highlights the impact and vital work we are doing to support health professionals in our medical community while honoring our valued partners.¹

WPHP continues to earn consistently high ratings for program services and satisfaction from stakeholders and program participants. In fact, 92% of colleagues view WPHP as a valuable resource to the medical community, with 88% reporting they would refer a colleague in need to WPHP. Among program participants, 84% describe their WPHP experience as helpful with one in five reporting that WPHP saved their life.

WPHP and Physician Health Programs (PHPs) nationwide play a critical role in the health and well-being of health professionals while safeguarding patient care. These programs have demonstrated measurable success in promoting physician health, enhancing patient safety, and fostering a more resilient and sustainable healthcare workforce. The following illustrates some of the ways WPHP and PHPs contribute to a stronger and safer healthcare system overall.

1. Enhancing Patient Safety and Care Quality

- Early intervention and referral to WPHP gives health professionals the opportunity to receive necessary treatment before a health condition negatively impacts patient care.
- Structured PHP health support is associated with decreased professional liability risks and exceptional health outcomes for program participants and graduates.²
- Multiple studies have demonstrated healthy physicians provide better care.

2. Mitigating Physician Burnout and Supporting Physician Well-Being

- Physician burnout remains a critical issue nationwide. While rates of burnout appear to be improving, physicians remain at higher risk than other professions with 45.2% reporting at least one symptom of burnout.³
- WPHP participants have consistently reported substantially lower rates of burnout than national averages. In 2024, 17% of WPHP program participants reported experiencing burnout at less than half the national average, underscoring the program's meaningful impact on physician well-being.

3. Reducing Professional Liability Risk & Proven Success in Outcomes and Recovery

- Participation in a PHP program supports health while also reducing the likelihood of professional liability claims. One peer-reviewed study has demonstrated that physicians who complete a PHP program have lower professional liability risk than their peers who have never participated in PHP monitoring.²
- WPHP's outcomes prove the program's effectiveness in supporting sustained recovery and professional reintegration among participants. According to data from the 2024 WPHP Annual Report, 85% of WPHP program participants are working in their professional field at the time of program discharge. Additionally, 86% of program participants diagnosed with a substance use disorder remain abstinent at five years.
- WPHP exit survey data shows that 75% of program participants report full remission of symptoms of their health condition at program discharge, with 98% in full or partial remission. In that same survey, 66% of WPHP participants also reported improved quality of life as a result of the program.



4. Strengthening Workforce Resilience and Sustainability

- By addressing health issues early on, PHPs reduce expenses related to turnover, training new physicians, and medical malpractice claims.
- A strong support system provided by PHPs can enhance physician retention rates. By normalizing help-seeking through PHPs and reducing the stigma associated with mental health and substance use disorders, these programs help the workforce overcome personal challenges while providing ongoing support.⁴⁻⁵

5. Providing Confidential Help and Trusted Advocacy

- One of the reasons the PHP model was developed was to provide confidentiality for health professionals with stigmatized health conditions as they are more likely to seek assistance when their information is kept private.
- WPHP provides participants with trusted, credible verification of health status and program adherence to support continuation or re-entry to practice. Many find this essential with 87% of program participants reporting needing and benefiting from WPHP's advocacy.
- Through strong confidentiality protections, 90% of WPHP's program participants receive help without ever being known to their licensing board.
- WPHP continues to make tremendous strides in advocating for license and credentialing question reforms and addressing other systemic barriers for health professionals locally and nationally. Recently, WPHP was consulted for the article "Reducing Barriers to Mental Health Care for Physicians: an Overview and Strategic Recommendations" in JAMA, underscoring the recognition that our advocacy efforts are receiving.⁶ The article highlights the life-saving impact of PHP programs and the importance of confidential help for physicians experiencing mental health conditions.

Looking ahead, WPHP remains committed to advancing the health and well-being of health professionals through our program as well as by providing ongoing education and outreach. To learn more about WPHP, view the annual report in its entirety, or make a referral, please visit our [website](#) or call 800-552-7236. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

References:

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