

## PHYSICIAN HEALTH GUIDELINES

### I. PURPOSE

- A. Sutter Medical Center Medical Staff is committed to provide medical staff members with a confidential avenue for addressing and resolving psychological, personality and/or physical health issues, without fear of professional reprisal. The process for assisting physicians in their health and well being is jointly shared between Medical Staff leadership and the Medical Staff Well Being Committee. These actions are separate from any Medical Staff disciplinary function.
- B. Issues can involve substance abuse, mental or physical problems, family or relationship problems, or any other factor that is interfering with a Medical Staff member's ability to be fully effective in practice of his/her profession.
- C. The specific purposes of the Well Being Committee are to:
  - 1. Provide resources to evaluate, support, aid and ensure intervention and referral for treatment of Sutter Medical Center's Medical Staff members brought to the Committee's attention. These resources are provided prior to, and ideally in lieu of, referral to those hospital or governmental committees and agencies that might result in censure of practice and/or licensing problems.
  - 2. Educate and inform Medical Staff members concerning health issues and the functions and process of the Committee as a resource for the Staff member.
  - 3. Assist the practitioner in meeting his/her own ethical obligations to enhance quality of care and protect patient safety.
  - 4. Be thoughtful and caring in assisting and educating practitioners to acknowledge, assess and resolve problems.
  - 5. Through its activities with staff members, enhancement of quality of care and protection of patient safety are also among the ultimate purposes of the Committee.

### II. PROCESS

- A. Members of the Medical Staff may be referred for assistance through a number of means, including:
  - 1. Self referrals
  - 2. Any member of the Medical Staff
  - 3. Other health care providers

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4. Family referral
- B. Well Being Committee Responsibility
- The Committee's primary services are two-fold:
1. Provide assessment, recommendations and referral-oriented services. Limited counseling may be involved.
    - a. Assessment may include information gathering, but will not include formal investigations, chart review, or the like.
    - b. This assessment will include a consideration of the practitioner's potential risk to patients, and whether the practitioner has appropriately imposed self-limitations to protect patients. The Committee should discuss these issues with the practitioner; however, the Committee is not empowered to impose practice restrictions.
    - c. The Committee is not itself established to conduct therapeutic counseling, however, members of the Committee are generally familiar with many of the problems and pressures encountered by practitioners, and may offer limited counseling as deemed appropriate.
    - d. The Committee will generally make recommendations to the practitioner concerning other available resources based on the individual situation. This may include referrals to professional support and monitoring programs.
    - e. Practitioner-identifiable contact with referral agencies, organizations, or providers will not be made without the practitioner's concurrence.
  2. Staff education regarding topics of health and well being.
    - a. Well Being Committee sponsors educational seminars to the Medical Staff on a regular basis.
    - b. Ongoing education of the signs of impairment, as well as, the services provided by the Well Being Committee is accomplished through the *Medical Staff Well Being Committee Brochure* that is disseminated upon initial appointment and periodically throughout the year to all Medical Staff members.
- C. Medical Staff Leadership Responsibility
- The Medical Staff leadership is responsible for the evaluation of a Medical Staff member's quality of care and ability to work professionally with patients, visitors and hospital staff. If concerns are identified, medical staff leadership will refer the practitioner to the Well Being Committee and/or other appropriate resources, i.e. fitness for duty evaluations and/or psychotherapy, for the express purpose of assisting the physician in the diagnosis and treatment of a potential illness or condition.
1. Prior to making a referral, medical staff leadership will evaluate the credibility of a complaint, allegation or concern regarding a Medical Staff member.
  2. Referrals will be made on a timely basis to the appropriate resource in an attempt to help the physician early in the process before disciplinary action becomes necessary.
  3. Monitoring of the physician will continue until rehabilitation or any disciplinary

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process is complete. This will be accomplished by the medical staff leaders through the ongoing QA program established at Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento. Any patient safety concerns identified will be reported to the Well Being Committee and/or other referral resource so that the issue(s), as appropriate, can be incorporated in their discussions with the physician.

4. A practitioner will be referred for formal disciplinary investigation and corrective action if the practitioner fails to adhere to appropriate protective measures to assure patient safety. In these instances, a report that includes the Well Being Committee or other referral source concerns for patient safety shall be made by the appropriate medical staff leader to the Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff may initiate corrective action measures as deemed necessary.

### III. CONFIDENTIALITY

An underlying element to the success of this program is confidentiality. The following measures are intended to assure confidentiality, while at the same time provide any needed protection of patients.

- A. Reporting of Well Being Committee activities or other referral resources will consist of regular general reports to the Chief of Staff and Department Chiefs. These reports will identify the practitioner but the specifics of his/her health issue are not necessary.
- B. The Well Being Committee's minutes shall be brief and general in nature, and shall not contain practitioner-identifying information.
- C. Any medical reports received will be held in strict confidence and reviewed by only those medical staff leaders with a need to know.

#### APPROVALS:

Medical Staff Well-Being Committee

03/19/2009

Medical Executive Committee

07/22/2009

Developed: 12/00

Reviewed: 2/04; 2/07; 3/09

Revised:

References: SMCS Medical Staff Well Being Committee Brochure

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