

SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

College of Nursing
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the College of Nursing (CON) to be in compliance with all policies of the clinical facilities with which the CON affiliates for student clinical learning experiences. The CON is committed to providing a safe environment for students, patients, clients, visitors, agency staff, and university faculty and staff. In furtherance of this commitment, all students enrolled in or seeking admission to any professional program within the CON are subject to urine drug screening as outlined in this policy.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe working and learning environment for students, patients, clients, visitors, agency staff, and university faculty and staff, and to ensure compliance with affiliated clinical facility requirements and applicable state and federal law.

Designated Testing Facility

All urine drug screens required under this policy shall be conducted at ArcPoint Labs in Chattanooga, Tennessee (or an approved satellite location). Students who reside within a 50-mile radius of the UTC main campus are required to use ArcPoint Labs as their designated testing site. Students residing beyond the 50-mile radius must contact the CON prior to testing to obtain approval for an alternative testing site. Screens conducted at a non-approved facility will be considered invalid and may be treated as a refusal to test.

The cost of substance testing is the responsibility of the student unless otherwise specified by the professional program.

Urine Drug Screening Requirements

Prior to Admission

All students seeking admission to a professional program within the CON are required to complete a urine drug screen prior to the start of clinical experiences or at the time specified by the program. Admission to the CON is contingent upon satisfactory drug screen results. If a student is found to be in violation of this policy prior to beginning the program, the student's admission will be rescinded and/or the student will be dismissed from the program.

To be considered for readmission, the student must complete, at the student's expense, a chemical dependency evaluation and an approved treatment program. Readmission will be considered only upon completion of treatment and upon the recommendation of the program's Academic Admissions Committee, the CON Associate Dean, and the CON Dean.

During the Program

All students are subject to urine drug screening at any point during their enrollment in a CON professional program, including but not limited to:

- Prior to or during any clinical rotation or placement
- Upon reasonable suspicion of substance use or impairment

- As required by affiliated clinical agency partners
- At random intervals, as applicable to specific program tracks

Students who are asked to leave a clinical site or classroom under reasonable suspicion are prohibited from operating a vehicle to travel to or from the testing site. The student must procure their own alternative transportation to and from the testing site.

The CON reserves the right to require urine drug screening at any time throughout a student's enrollment without prior notice. Students will be responsible for the cost of any drug screens the student is required to undergo in accordance with this policy after the student's initial admission drug screen.

Specimen Collection Requirements

Once a student has reported to the designated testing facility for the purpose of urine drug screening either voluntary or under the direction of the program, the student may not leave the facility prior to providing a valid, testable urine specimen. Departure from the testing facility before a valid test result is available will be treated as a refusal to test and will be subject to the same consequences as a confirmed positive result.

Medical Review Officer (MRO) Review

All urine drug screen specimens may be subject to additional testing and/or review by a designated Medical Review Officer (MRO). The MRO is a licensed physician responsible for reviewing and interpreting laboratory results, evaluating alternative medical explanations for positive, adulterated, substituted, or invalid results, and issuing a final determination regarding the validity of the specimen and result.

Students may be contacted by the MRO to provide documentation of a lawfully prescribed medication prior to a final result being issued. Failure to respond to MRO inquiries in a timely manner i.e. **within 1 business day or 24 hours**, may result in the result being finalized as positive or as a refusal to test. Any positive screen may be sent for confirmatory testing prior to the MRO's final determination. The cost of any additional testing required is the responsibility of the student being tested.

The student must sign a release authorizing the disclosure of results to UTC University Health Services, which will inform the CON Dean and/or CON Associate Dean. All results released will be disclosed directly to University Health Services and then to the CON Dean and/or CON Associate Dean.

Reasonable Suspicion Drug Testing

CON faculty or affiliated clinical agency staff may request a urine drug screen if a student's conduct creates a reasonable suspicion that the student is using or is impaired by drugs or alcohol. Conduct that may create reasonable suspicion includes, without limitation:

- Emitting an odor (such as the smell of alcohol on breath) or exhibiting physical symptoms of drug or alcohol use, as directly observed by faculty or clinical staff
- Exhibiting slurred speech, lethargy, staggered gait, flushed face, impaired memory, dilated or pinpoint pupils, and/or erratic mood swings, as directly observed by faculty or clinical staff
- Erratic behavior, frequent absenteeism, or deterioration of academic or clinical performance
- Substance abuse-related conviction or finding in a legal or administrative proceeding

If a student's conduct creates reasonable suspicion that the student is using or is impaired by drugs or alcohol, the student's conduct will be documented, and the student will be asked to leave the clinical site or classroom and will be sent for immediate drug screening at the student's expense.

Prohibited Conduct Regarding Specimen Integrity

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal from the CON:

- Suspected or confirmed adulteration of a urine specimen
- Tampering with the specimen, collection materials, or collection process in any manner
- Contamination of the specimen through the introduction of any foreign substance
- Refusal to submit to a required drug screen
- Departure from the testing facility prior to providing a valid urine specimen

Determination of suspected adulteration, tampering, or contamination shall be made by the testing facility and/or CON administration based on specimen validity testing results, observed behavior, or other reasonable evidence. A finding of suspected or confirmed adulteration, tampering, or contamination will be treated as a confirmed positive result for purposes of this policy.

Consequences of Policy Violations

Pre-Licensure Students

Pre-licensure students who are found in violation of this policy, including a confirmed positive drug screen, refusal to test, or any prohibited conduct related to specimen integrity, will be dismissed from the CON and will not be considered for readmission.

Licensed Professional Students

Licensed professional students (including but not limited to Licensed Practical Nurses and Registered Nurses enrolled in an advanced degree program) who test positive on a urine drug screen will be reported to the appropriate state reporting agency, including but not limited to the Tennessee Board of Nursing, in accordance with applicable state law and reporting requirements. Additionally, results will be reported to the Tennessee Professional Assistance Program (TnPAP) as applicable. Readmission for licensed professional students may be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with TnPAP.

The CON assumes no liability for any disciplinary action initiated by the Tennessee Board of Nursing or any other regulatory body as a result of required reporting.

General Disciplinary Outcomes

Depending on the nature and circumstances of the violation, consequences may include one or more of the following:

- Suspension from clinical rotations pending review
- Placement of an academic hold
- Referral to the Student Affairs conduct process
- Immediate withdrawal or dismissal from all enrolled courses
- Dismissal from the CON

The Dean (or designee) may request to meet with the student. A final review will be completed by the Dean (or designee) within five business days of the report of the incident. The student may not return to class or clinical rotations until the review has been completed.

Appeals

The student has the right to appeal a decision of dismissal or denial of readmission in accordance with the appeal procedure set forth in the CON Student Handbook.

Voluntary Assistance

The College of Nursing encourages students who are struggling with substance use to seek assistance voluntarily and to assume responsibility for their personal and professional conduct. Students seeking voluntary assistance are encouraged to contact UTC Student Health Services or the Tennessee Professional Assistance Program (TnPAP) for confidential support and resources.

Confidentiality

Drug screening results are treated as confidential student health information and will be disclosed only on a need-to-know basis in accordance with applicable federal and state law, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) where applicable. Required disclosures to regulatory bodies such as the Tennessee Board of Nursing are not subject to confidentiality restrictions under this policy.

This policy is subject to revision. Students are responsible for reviewing the most current version of the College of Nursing Student Handbook.