

Nebraska Licensee Assistance Program

Substance abuse assistance for health service professionals licensed, certified or registered by the State of Nebraska

Addiction Is Not A Decision Making Problem

In almost every case where a licensed health service professional has been caught using alcohol or drugs in violation of a state law, a company policy, or a licensure regulation, the licensee will declare the violation will never occur again. The licensee's rationale is that now that he has gotten into trouble for the use of alcohol or drugs, he has made a decision to never do the violation again. It may be a decision to never again smoke marijuana, or drink and drive, or divert drugs for his own use. It is a rationale he truly believes at the time, and due to the painful consequences of the violation, such as being referred to the Nebraska Licensee Assistance Program, a night in jail and license suspension, or disciplinary action at work, he feels every motivation not to repeat the offense. Often his conviction that he has realized the error of his ways and has made a committed decision to change, convinces colleagues, employers, family members, even counseling or treatment professionals at times, that he has solved his alcohol or drug problem and there no longer needs to be a concern about his use of alcohol or drugs.

Oh, if it were just that easy. If alcohol/drug abuse or addiction could be resolved with just a simple "I will never do it again" decision. However, in reality, abuse and addiction are very difficult to resolve. At a minimum, a lifestyle change is required. And we all know how hard it is to make a significant lifestyle change in our lives. We all know it takes a lot of hard work and growing pains to make such a change.

In the case of an addiction, there is an illness that must be arrested. An addiction requires treatment and likely years of commitment, effort, and persistence to completely arrest the illness. The addicted licensee usually has to complete a spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, social, and sometimes financial, transformation to successfully achieve and sustain a healthy recovery.

It is important for the licensees in trouble and all those who live with them, work with them, or try to help them to understand that it is a set up for failure to believe that just a decision will solve the problems. Alcohol and drug abuse and addiction problems run deeper than that in the lives of those afflicted. We can offer our best help to them by affirming the need for counseling, treatment, and a 12-step self-help recovery program to resolve these problems. We can affirm the decision that they do need to make is a commitment to taking the many realistic and appropriate steps to changing a lifestyle and achieving a recovery from addiction.

If you are a licensed health service professional or an employer wanting more information about substance abuse or addiction recovery or other related issues, please contact the Nebraska Licensee Assistance Program (NE LAP) at (800) 851-2336 or (402) 354-8055 or visit our website at www.lapne.org. If you know of or are concerned about a colleague's alcohol/drug abuse, contact the NE LAP for appropriate intervention and ongoing support. You may be saving a life, a family or a career.