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## What is the KARE for Nurses Program?

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The Kentucky Alternative Recovery Effort (KARE) for Nurses is a program developed and implemented by the Kentucky Board of Nursing. The purpose of the KARE for Nurses Program is to protect and safeguard the health of the citizens of the Commonwealth by identifying, assisting and monitoring nurses whose abilities to provide nursing care are compromised by a substance use disorder so that they may eventually return to competent and safe nursing practice.

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The program recognizes that nurses are individuals who have dedicated their lives to helping others and are now in a need of assistance. The foundation of the KARE for Nurses Program is that substance use disorders are treatable and that the nurse's recovery and return to competent nursing practice is in the best interest of both the nurse and public health.

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The KARE for Nurses program believes that a nurse should not lose a job or license due to substance use disorder and offers an opportunity for treatment and monitoring. The program is administered with compassion, concern, and dignity for the nurse as well as what is in the best interest of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

To obtain further information or to seek admission to the Program, please contact the following:

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# Kentucky Alternative Recovery Effort (KARE) for Nurses

An alternative to discipline program designed to assist nurses with a substance use disorder obtain treatment and eventually return to safe nursing practice.



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## The Disease

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Many people believe that nurses are immune from addiction by essence of their intelligence and education. In reality, exposure, access, availability, and familiarity with medications often lead pre-disposed health professionals to develop a Substance Use Disorder (SUD). Manifestations of a SUD include, but are not limited to, recurrent substance use resulting in an inability to fulfill obligations at work, home or school; recurrent substance use in physically hazardous situations (working while impaired or driving while impaired); development of tolerance leading to using greater amounts of substances as well as using more frequently; development of withdrawal symptoms when not using substances; and cravings or having a strong urge to use substances.

SUDs are characterized by the use of drugs and/or alcohol in spite of potential adverse consequences. This compulsive use cycle may have periods where use is controlled, but it is normally followed by at least one episode of out-of-control use which may cause adverse consequences in one's life. Not recognizing a SUD will exacerbate the problem and cause harm to oneself as well as others. This is a progressive disease that, if left untreated, is fatal.

The Board believes that a SUD is a disease which has a myriad of factors influencing the development and progression of the disease itself. Some factors include environmental, biological, psychological, emotional, and/or genetic factors. A growing body of scientific evidence supports that SUDs are considered a chronic but treatable disease.

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## Services

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The KARE for Nurses Program develops agreements based upon the unique circumstances of the nurse. Monitoring can be facilitated in many ways, some which are listed below:

- Assistance with identification, assessment, and referral to approved treatment providers;
- Monitoring participants for a period of at least five (5) years during early recovery;
- Provide education to nurses, employers, and other groups about the program; and
- Provide encouragement and support to help ensure the participants are able to practice nursing in accordance with acceptable and prevailing standards of safe nursing care.



See the KBN website at  
<http://kbn.ky.gov>  
 for additional information.

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## Eligibility Requirements

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A nurse may access the program by self-referral, board referral, or referral from another entity (such as an employer). Admission to the KARE for Nurses Program is available to individuals who, at the time of application, meet the requirements listed below:

- Is a Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse, or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse licensed in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, or, an applicant for a credential issued by the board;
- Submit a written request for participation in the program;
- Admit in writing to abusing or being dependent upon alcohol and/or drugs;
- Have not been terminated from a similar program in this or any other state for noncompliance;
- Obtain a substance use disorder assessment performed by a Board approved evaluator, which conforms to Board guidelines;
- Agree not to be employed in any capacity in a patient care setting or one that requires licensure until approved to do so by the Program staff; and
- Agree to the terms set forth in the agreement, and 201 KAR 20:450.