

Yale School of Nursing

Policy on Student Drug Tests and Impairment in Clinical Settings

Effective Date: February 18, 2026

Approved By: February, 18, 2026

Applies To: All YSN nursing students required to participate and/or participating in clinical practicum or rotations

Policy Statement

Yale School of Nursing (YSN) is committed to maintaining a safe, effective, and professional clinical learning environment. All students must comply with the drug testing and substance use requirements of YSN and its affiliated clinical partners.

If a student fails a drug test required by YSN or a clinical partner, the student will not be permitted to start his or her clinical rotation or will be immediately removed from all clinical activities. YSN will evaluate the result in collaboration with the testing vendor and determine next steps. If a student is impaired or suspected of impairment, he or she may be immediately removed from all clinical activities and suspended from all academic and clinical activities until reinstatement. Students must demonstrate fitness for safe clinical practice before being reinstated, which may include receiving drug clearance.

YSN has a duty to ensure patient safety, maintain compliance with clinical site policies, and uphold professional standards.

Definitions

- **Failed Drug Test:** Test result is positive for an illegal drug, a controlled substance and/or a prescription drug, for which there is no medically proper purpose.
 - **Testing Vendor (CastleBranch):** CastleBranch facilitates ordering of drug tests and background checks and posts results to YSN. Results are reviewed by the CastleBranch representative - Medical Review Officer (MRO) according to standard protocols.
 - **Clearance:** Written determination by CastleBranch that the student may safely return to clinical practice, based on review of the final drug test result and any required supporting documentation.
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Standard for Positive Result Process (MRO Protocol)

When a laboratory test returns a positive result, CastleBranch posts results after the following steps occur:

1. **MRO Review:** Upon receipt of the lab report, the MRO determines whether student contact is required. If so, the MRO initiates contact with the student.
2. **Student Contact:** Students have up to 48 hours (2 business days) to respond to initial contact. The MRO will conduct a confidential interview, confirm identity, explain the findings, and allow the student to provide a valid medical explanation.

3. **Documentation Window:** The student is given up to 72 hours (3 business days, extendable at the MRO's discretion) to provide valid documentation (e.g., prescription records, physician note, or pharmacy verification).
 4. **Outcome:**
 - If valid documentation is provided and accepted by the MRO, the result is overturned and posted as negative.
 - If documentation is not received or deemed invalid by the MRO, the result is posted as positive with an explanation.
 - In some cases, the MRO may recommend a Fit-for-Duty evaluation if safety concerns are identified during review.
 5. **Confidentiality:** YSN is only notified of the final posted result (including the name of the drug if the test is positive). Details of prescriptions, documentation, or medical interviews remain confidential between the student and the MRO.
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YSN Process for Positive Drug Test

1. **Notification and Immediate Action**
 - YSN is notified of a positive result.
 - The student is notified in writing.
 - The student is immediately suspended from all clinical duties pending investigation by MRO.
 2. **YSN Review**
 - YSN reviews the MRO-determined result.
 3. **Clearance Requirement**
 - Clearance must confirm the student is fit for safe clinical practice.
 - Clearance documentation must be submitted directly to YSN before reinstatement.
 4. **Academic and Professional Consequences**
 - Students remain suspended until resolved.
 - Suspension may delay progression or graduation.
 - Failure to achieve resolution may lead to delayed participation in clinical practicums or rotations, which may jeopardize continuation in the program.
 5. **Confidentiality**
 - Records are confidential in accordance with Yale policy and FERPA.
 - A positive drug test may be shared with the clinical site in accordance with the clinical site policies and rotation agreement.
 6. **Supportive Resources**
 - Students are provided referrals to Yale Health, or Private Counseling, and Student Life services.
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Additional Testing Requirements

1. **Random Testing**
 - YSN and its clinical partners reserve the right to require random drug and/or alcohol testing at any time.
 - Students selected for random testing must comply immediately. Refusal or delay may be treated as a failed drug test.
 - Any positive drug test will be reviewed in accordance with the above process.
2. **For-Cause Testing**

- Students must comply with the substance use requirements of the clinical site and not engage in improper use of substances.
- If a faculty member, preceptor, or clinical supervisor observes behavior suggesting impairment (e.g., slurred speech, unsteady gait, odor of alcohol or drugs, erratic behavior, or other signs of being altered) or otherwise suspects impairment, the student may be immediately removed from the classroom, laboratory, or clinical setting. In this case, YSN or its clinical partners may require an immediate drug or alcohol test.
 - The student may not return to academic or clinical activities until testing and clearance are complete and/or the student has demonstrated fitness for safe clinical practice or engagement in the classroom or lab.

Reporting to the Board of Nursing (BON)

1. Hospitals and certain health care professionals are required to report to the Connecticut Department of Public Health any information that shows that another health care professional (such as an RN, LPN and APRN) is, or may be, unable to practice his or her profession with reasonable skill or safety for reasons that include (i) abuse or excessive use of drugs, including alcohol, narcotics or chemicals; (ii) illegal, incompetent or negligent conduct in the practice of the profession of the health care professional; and (iii) possession, use, prescription for use or distribution of controlled substances or legend drugs, except for therapeutic or other medically proper purpose. Concerns related to drug diversion or inappropriate prescribing of controlled substances are also reportable to the Department of Public Health and the Department of Consumer Protection, Drug Control Division. YSN will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether a failed drug test must be reported. While students who are not licensed as a health care professional might not be reportable under this standard, some BONs may require disclosure at the time of licensure application.

The University provides this information to comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, which requires colleges to implement and annually distribute a drug and alcohol prevention program for students and employees. This notice summarizes the University's standards of conduct (prohibiting the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol on University property or in University activities), the disciplinary sanctions that may apply to students and employees, applicable Connecticut and federal legal penalties, the health risks of illicit drug use and alcohol abuse, and available counseling, treatment, rehabilitation, and re-entry resources. The University also conducts a biennial review to assess program effectiveness, implement needed changes, and ensure consistent enforcement. Up to date information is found here: https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/departement/registrar/document/drug_policy_document.pdf