

Signs & Behaviors: If You See Something, Do Something

Early identification of the signs and behaviors associated with substance use disorder and drug diversion reduces the risk of harm to patients and providers. Co-workers play an important role by recognizing and reporting suspicion to supervisors/appropriate chain of command. If signs or behaviors are noticed or you have questions or concerns, assistance is available through the AANA Helpline at 800-654-5167 or aana.com/GettingHelp

Impairment

BEHAVIORS

- Severe mood swings, personality changes
- Frequent or unexplained tardiness, work absences, illness or physical complaints
- Elaborate excuses
- Underperformance
- Difficulty with authority
- Poorly explained errors, accidents or injuries
- Wearing long sleeves when inappropriate
- Confusion, memory loss, and difficulty concentrating or recalling details and instructions
- Visibly intoxicated
- Refuses drug testing
- Ordinary tasks require greater effort and consume more time
- Unreliability in keeping appointments and meeting deadlines
- Relationship discord (e.g., professional, familial, marital, platonic)

SIGNS

- Physical indications (e.g., track marks, bloodshot eyes)
- Signs indicative of drug diversion (see right column)
- Deterioration in personal appearance
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Discovered unconscious or comatose

Drug Diversion

BEHAVIORS

- Consistently uses more drugs for cases than colleagues
- Frequent volunteering to administer narcotics, relieve colleagues of casework, especially on cases where opioids are administered
- Consistently arrives early, stays late, or frequently volunteers for overtime
- Frequent breaks or trips to bathroom
- Heavy wastage of drugs
- Drugs and syringes in pockets

SIGNS

- Anesthesia record does not reconcile with drug dispensed and administered to patient
- Patient has unusually significant or uncontrolled pain after anesthesia
- Higher pain score as compared with other anesthesia providers
- Times of cases do not correlate when provider dispenses drug from automated dispenser
- Inappropriate drug choices and doses for patients
- Missing medications or prescription pads
- Drugs, syringes, needles improperly stored
- Signs of medication tampering, including broken vials returned to pharmacy
- Propofol-specific: Facial trauma (bruises, orbital fracture) from car accidents or sudden unconsciousness; seizures

Source: [AANA.com/SignsandBehaviors](https://aana.com/SignsandBehaviors)