



What to do when a Healthcare Professional Needs Help

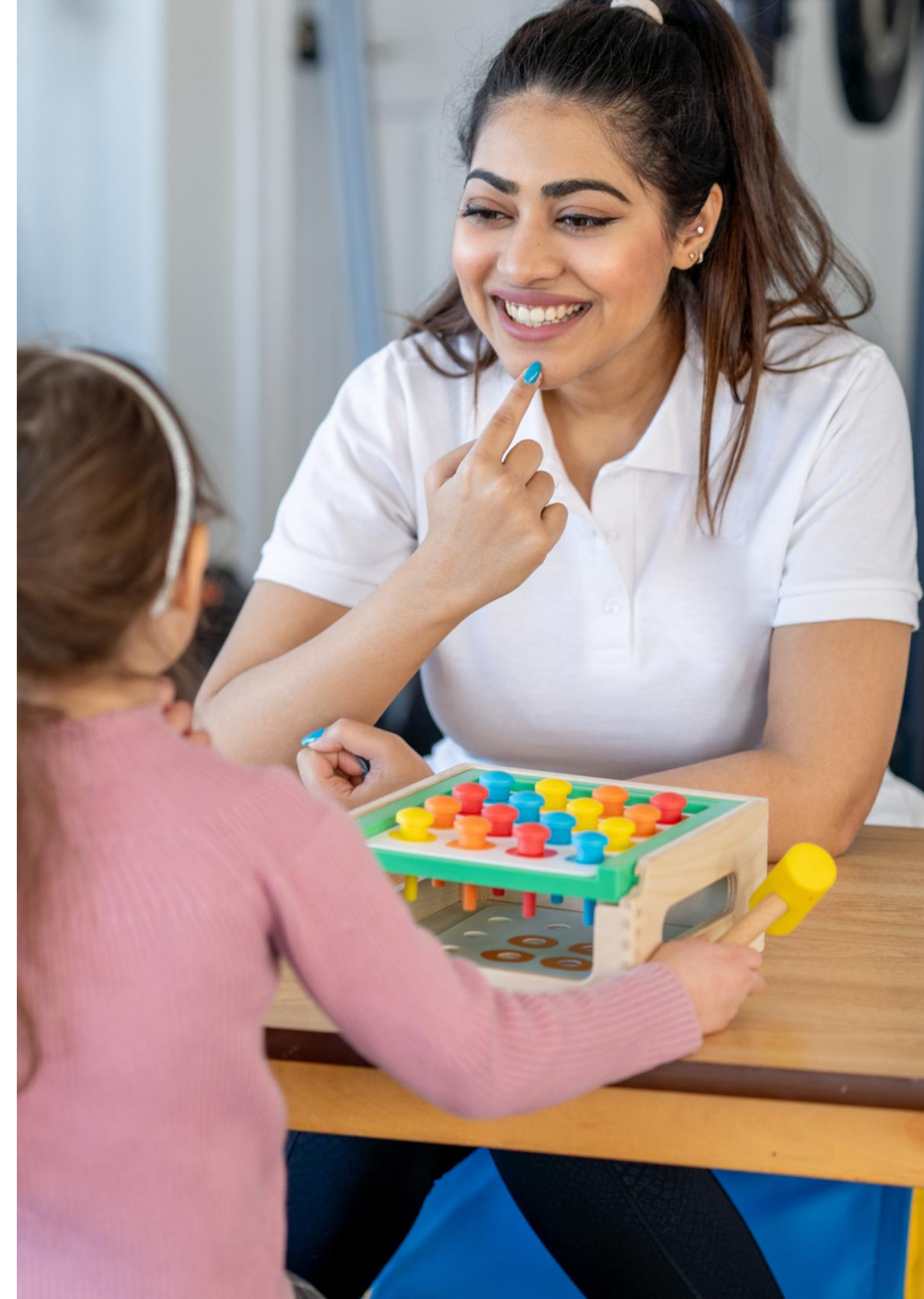
*An overview of the safe haven program
for Ohio Speech and Hearing Professionals Board licensees*

Presented by:

Richard N. Whitney, MD, DABAM, FASAM

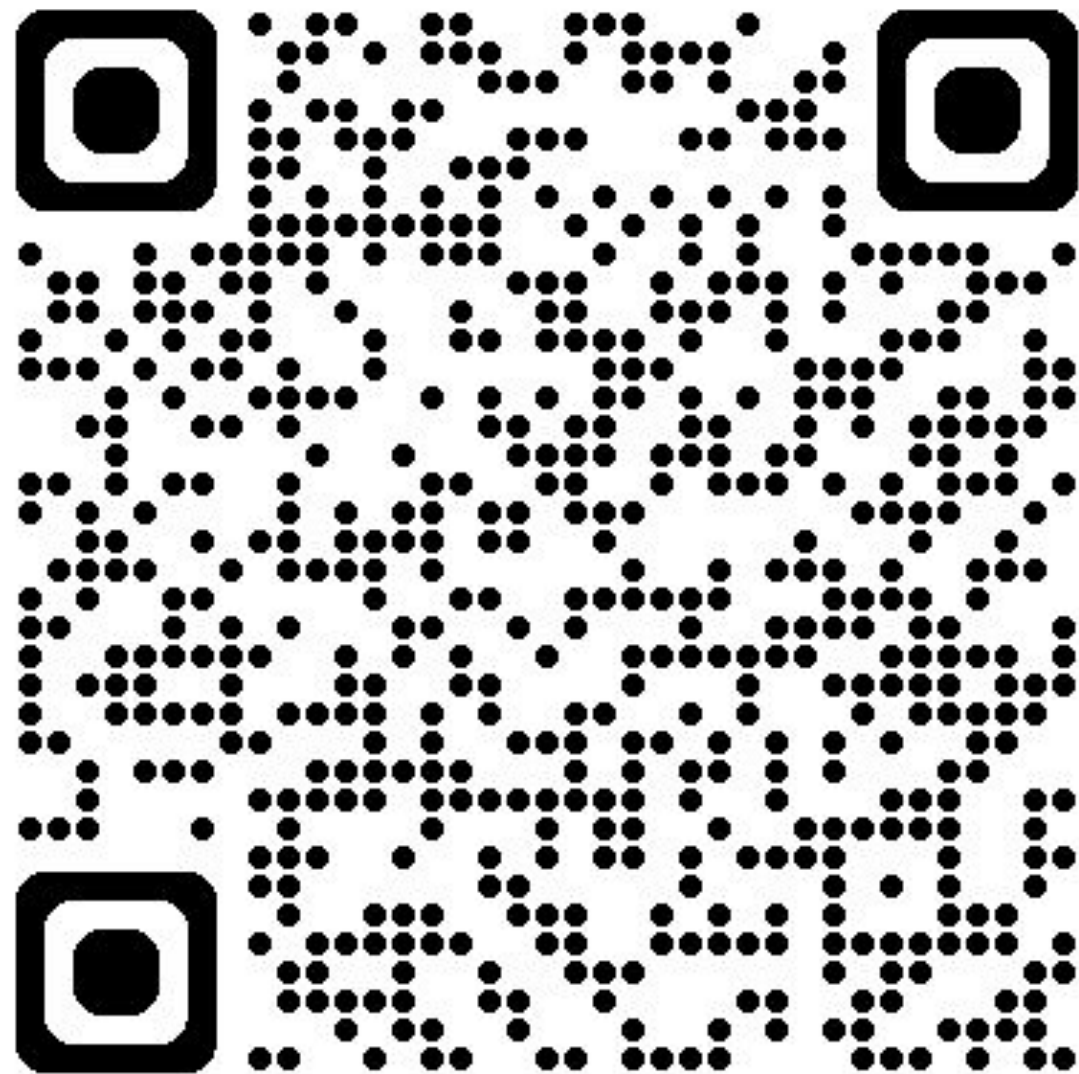
Ohio School Speech Pathology Educational Audiology Coalition

October 14, 2025





Before We Begin



Please take this brief
pre-test survey to help us
improve our education
program



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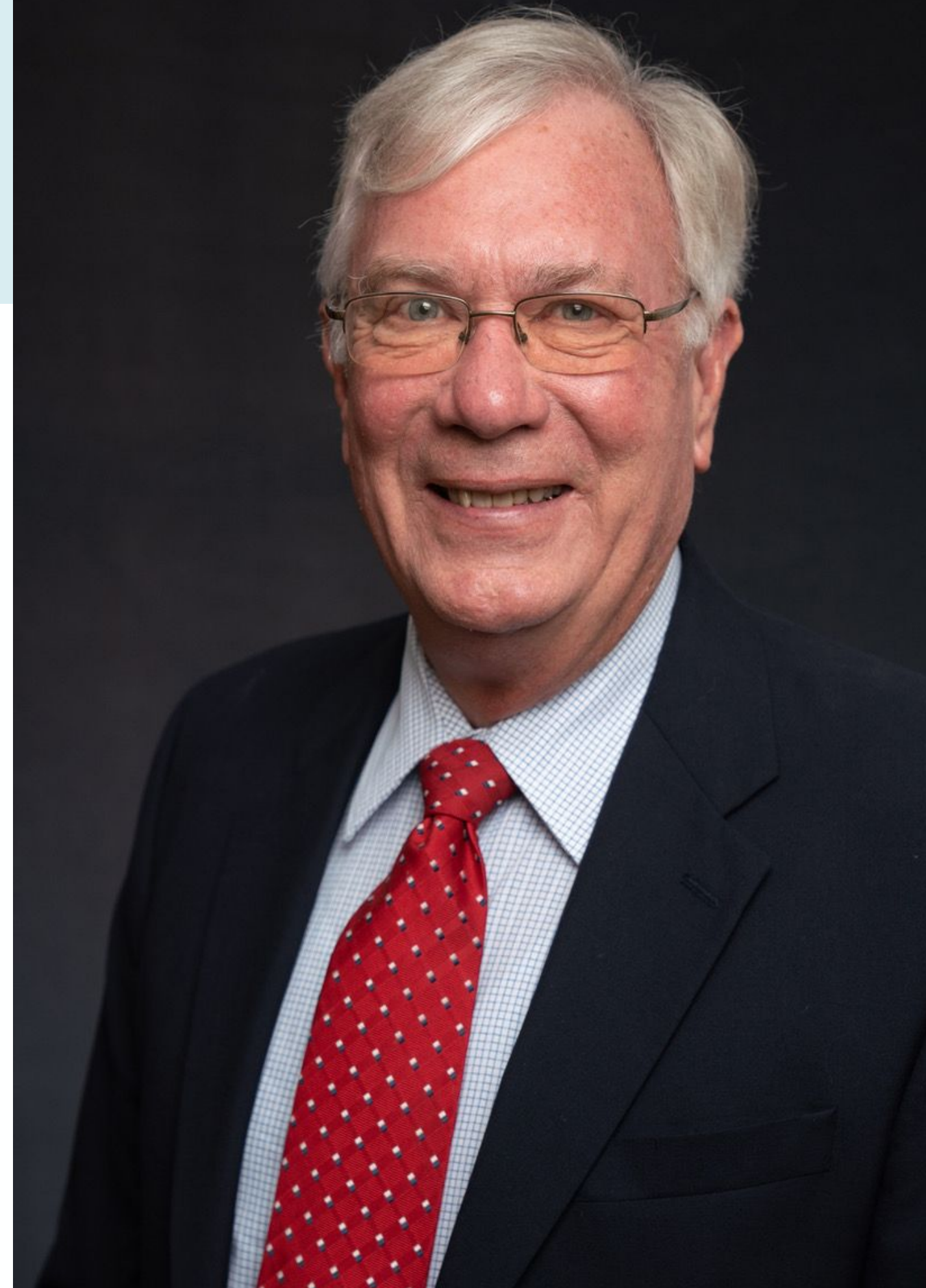
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Who am I?

Richard N. Whitney, MD, DABAM, FASAM

Medical Director

- Joined OhioPHP in 2021
- Served as Medical Director at Shepherd Hill for 17 years
- Diplomate of the American Board of Addiction Medicine
- Fellow of the American Society of Addiction Medicine





What is OhioPHP?

The Ohio Professionals Health Program (OhioPHP) is a nonprofit organization that started as a group of physicians wanting to support their peers struggling with mental health or substance use disorders.

Today, OhioPHP assists hundreds of healthcare workers across the state with a wide range of concerns including stress, burnout, mental health, or substance use disorders and much more!

A person wearing a red, white, and blue plaid button-down shirt is holding a large white rectangular sign. The sign is centered in the frame and contains the word 'AGENDA' in a large, bold, dark blue serif font. Below the title is a list of seven items, each preceded by a small dark blue circle. The person's hands are visible on the left and right sides of the sign, holding it steady. The background is a plain, light gray.

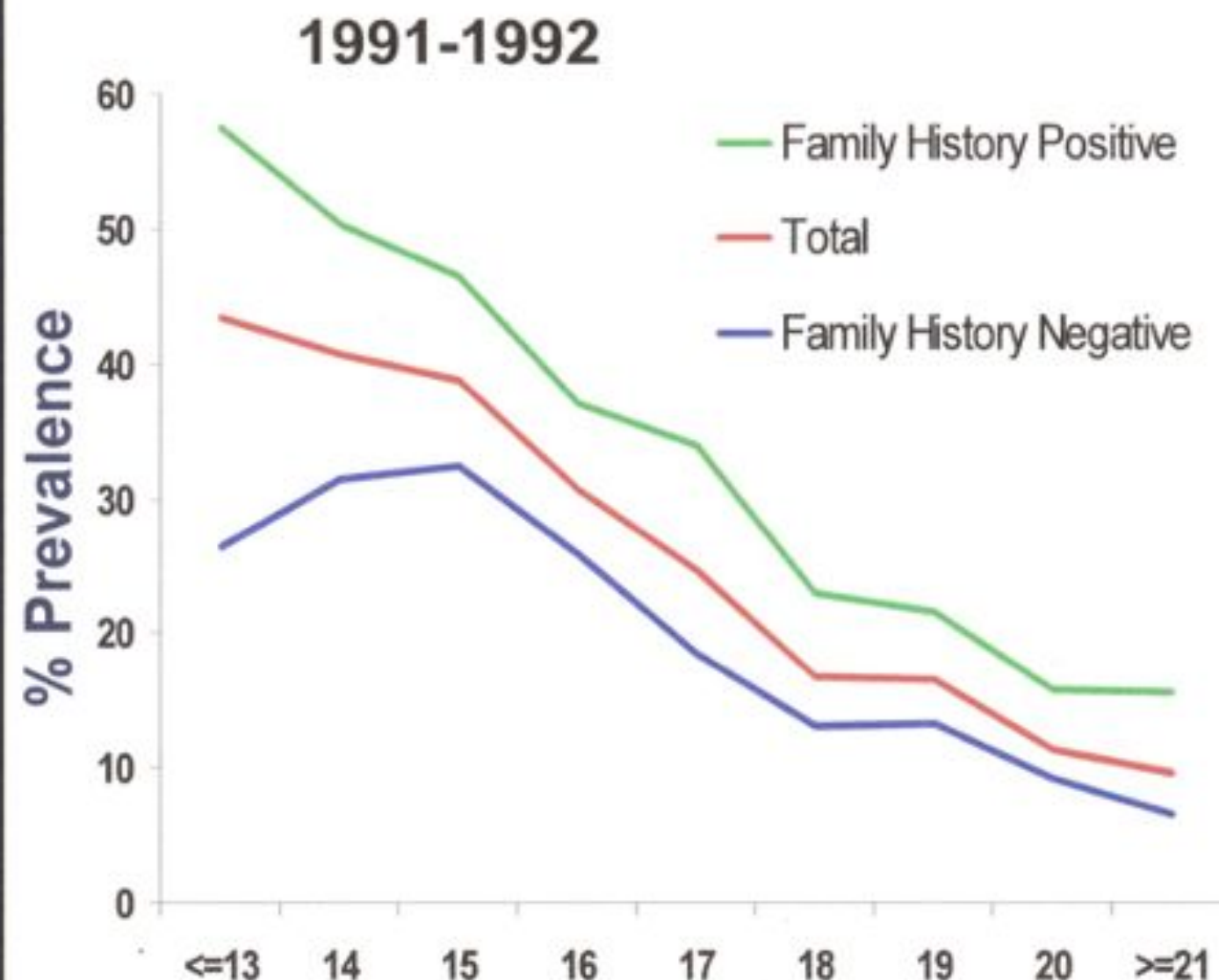
AGENDA

- SUDs, Mental Health Disorders, & Professional Burnout
- When a Healthcare Professional Needs Help
- Identifying Signs
- How to Approach a Colleague
- What's Next?
- Case Examples
- If YOU Need Help



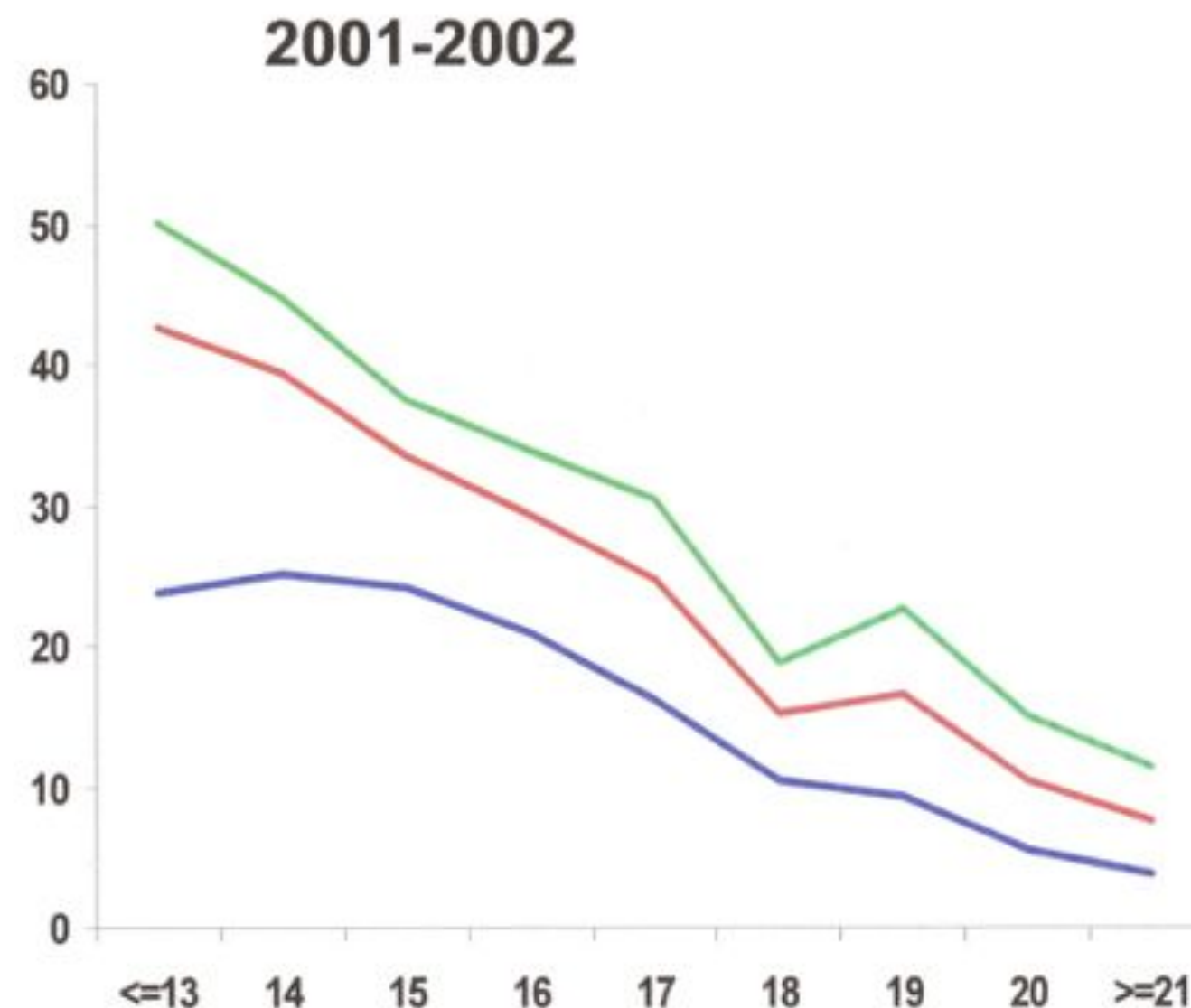
Substance Use Disorders, Mental Health Disorders, & Burnout in HCPs

Prevalence of Lifetime Alcohol Dependence by Age of First Alcohol Use



Age at First Alcohol Use

Source: Grant and Dawson. *J Subst Abuse*. 1998. 10(2):163-73.



Age at First Alcohol Use

Source: 2001-2002 National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions



Prevalence of Mental Illness



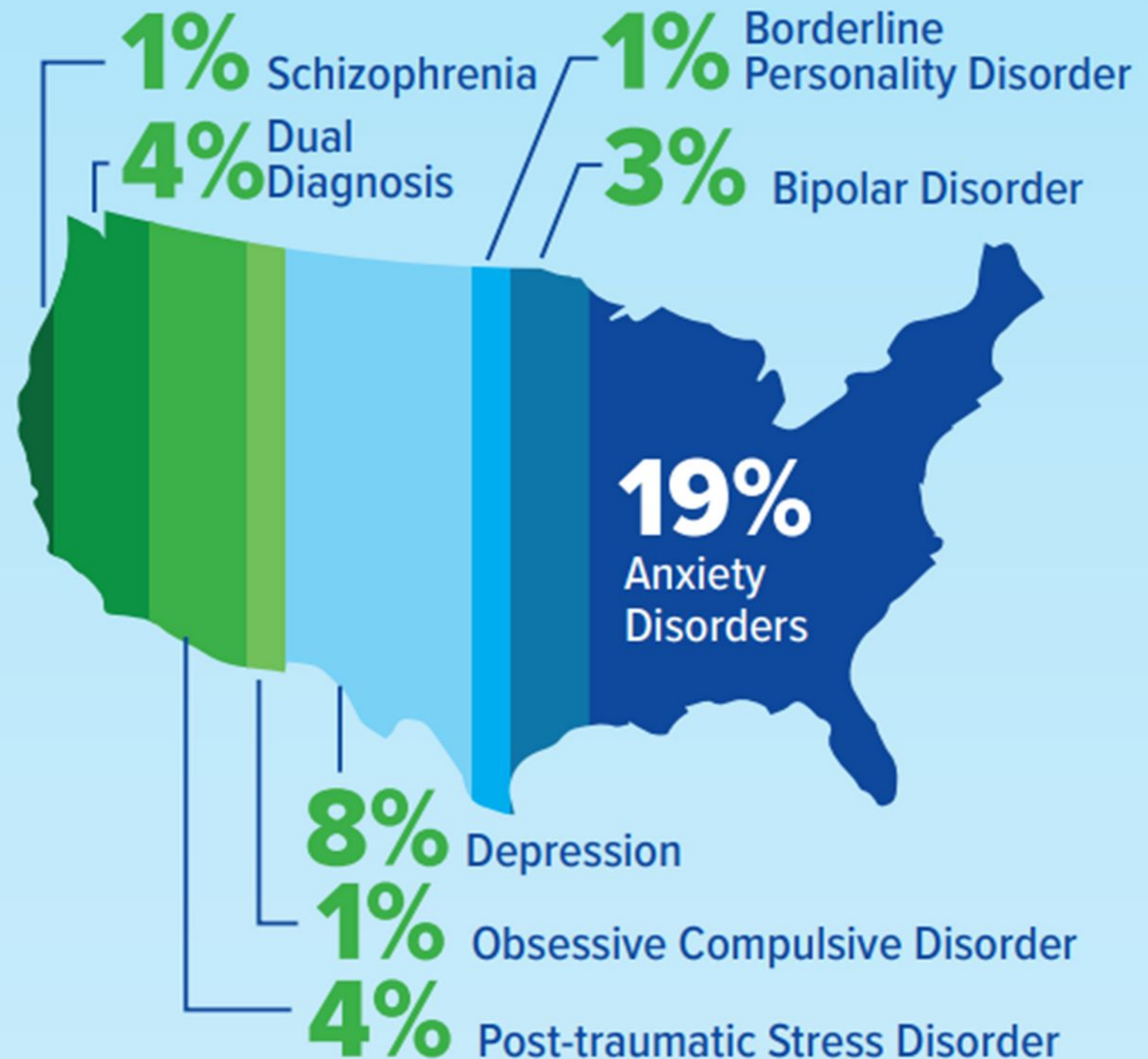
National Alliance on Mental Illness



Prevalence of Mental Illness

National Alliance on Mental Illness

12 MONTH PREVALENCE OF COMMON MENTAL ILLNESSES (ALL U.S. ADULTS)





Prevalence of Burnout

Physician Burnout Rates

2017	2020	2021
43.9%	38.2%	62.8%

Would choose to become a physician again

2020	2021
72.2%	57.1%



Prevalence of Burnout

Other Burnout Rates (Ranges)

Residents	Nurses	Psychologists
31-70%	35-55%	28-56%



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When a Healthcare Professional Needs Help



Who's Involved?

When a Healthcare Professional Needs Help

- Workplace
- Regulatory Boards
- OhioPHP
- You!



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The Role of Workplace Leadership

- Medical executive committees, peer reviews, credentials committees, department chairs, nursing supervisors, residency/fellowship directors, etc., make key leadership decisions related to hospital system staff policies, procedures, and rules, with emphasis on quality control and quality improvement initiatives
- This can include decisions about healthcare professionals who may be experiencing potentially impairing conditions such as: substance use disorders, mental health issues, and/or physical health challenges that may impact patient safety
- Now, with confidential, safe haven programs (including the SMBO confidential monitoring program) hospital leadership may contact OhioPHP directly to obtain confidential information regarding potential next steps, support for healthcare providers, and other challenging situations



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The Role of Regulatory Boards

- Regulatory boards issue licenses and oversee the practice of healthcare professionals
- Mission is to protect and enhance the safety of the public through regulation
- Intervene on practitioners if concerns of impairment
- Partner with OhioPHP in the creation of safe haven programs for licensees and applicants who may be suffering with SUDs, mental health disorders, burnout, and some physical health conditions



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Your Role

When a Healthcare Professional Needs Help

- Identifying Signs of Potential Impairment
- Offering Support
- Your Duty to Report



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Identifying Signs: Substance Use Disorders



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Identifying Signs of SUDs

Community & Physical Indicators

- Withdraws from community activities, church, friends, leisure, hobbies, & peers
- Exhibits embarrassing behavior at clubs or parties
- Behavior is unreliable and unpredictable in the community and in social events
- Personal hygiene deteriorates and his or her clothing and dress habits deteriorate
- Has multiple physical symptoms and complaints
- Experiences frequent hospitalizations and has numerous visits to physicians, dentists and other HCPs



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Identifying Signs of SUDs

Place of Employment Indicators

- Patient appointments & schedule become disorganized & progressively later
- Behavior toward staff & patients is hostile, withdrawn, or unreasonable
- Spends time behind ‘locked doors’
- Patients complain to staff about the HCP’s behavior
- Frequently absent from the office or has unexplained or frequent absences
- Arrives late or exhibits inappropriate or abnormal behavior
- Decrease in the quality of the HCP’s performance
- Not responding to calls and text messages or is slow to do so



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Identifying Signs: Mental Health Disorders



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Identifying Signs Depression



- Frequent irritability and/or anger
- Changes in energy, focus, and sleeping patterns
- Social withdrawal: avoiding social contact, skipping activities they enjoy, or isolating themselves
- May create difficult social situations, have worse interactions, and be more sensitive to negative social stimuli
- Rumination on negative interpersonal events
- May say hurtful things and lash out in anger
- May frequently not arrive for scheduled shifts



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Identifying Signs Anxiety

- May avoid places where there are other people, or avoid speaking to others, or avoid participation in events fear of embarrassment
- May feel overly self-conscious or fear that others will judge them negatively
- Physical symptoms such as blushing, sweating, trembling, or having a rapid heart rate
- May have difficulty participating in conversation, speaks in a very quiet voice, or avoids making eye contact
- Frequently missed deadlines



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Identifying Signs: Stress & Burnout



Identifying Signs: Stress in the Workplace

- Absenteeism
- Tardiness
- Missing deadlines
- Decreased productivity
- Conflicts with co-workers
- Mood swings
- Withdrawal from others



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Identifying Signs: Burnout

- May be less productive, miss deadlines, or make more mistakes
- Increasingly negative, cynical, or detached
- Appears to have a short temper and get frustrated more easily
- Having trouble focusing on tasks and being forgetful
- Disconnection from colleagues and avoidance of social situations



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Identifying Signs: Burnout

- Struggling to muster any enthusiasm for their work (apathy towards patient care)
- Missing more work days due to illness or lack of motivation
- Comments about quitting or initiating a career change



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Overlap of Signs & Symptoms

SUDs, Mental Health, and Burnout

- Social Isolation
- Irritability/anger
- Reduced performance
- Negative attitude toward patients
- Arrives late/unexplained absences
- Unpredictable or unreliable behavior
- Disruptive behavior

Don't assume without getting more information!



How to Approach a Colleague



Question

Have you ever been concerned
about a colleague's mental health
and well-being?



How to Approach a Colleague

1. Choose a suitable time and confidential location
2. Plan a straightforward message
3. Be honest and specific
4. Express your feelings about what you've observed
5. Give your colleague an opportunity to respond
6. Encourage them to call OhioPHP
7. Follow-up with them



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How to Approach a Colleague

Key Points:

- Be mindful of your tone and body language
- Approach conversation with empathy and concerns, avoiding accusatory language or trying to diagnose
- Respect their privacy
- Focus on listening more than talking
 - Actively listen to their concerns without interrupting
- ***If their situation seems severe or beyond your capacity to support, encourage them to seek professional help, such as from OhioPHP**



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How to Approach a Colleague

What not to do:

Avoid:

- Pressuring them to share more than they are comfortable sharing
- Making assumptions about their mental health issues
- Offering unsolicited advice or trying to "fix" their problems
- Sharing their personal information with others without their consent
- Minimizing their feelings or dismissing their concerns



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Offering Support Substance Use Disorders

Keep it positive: “How about trying a few alcohol-free nights each week?”

Get specific: “I’m worried about your drinking because I smelled alcohol on your breath last week.”

Offer support: “I know that drinking less is hard for you. How can I support you?”

Be flexible: “I can see that you’re not ready to talk about this yet. I’m here for you whenever you are ready.”

Offer resources: www.ohiophp.org/substance-use



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Offering Support

Mental Health

Keep it positive: "I wanted to check in and see how you're doing. Work can be stressful, and I'm here to listen if you need to talk."

Get specific: "I've noticed you've been missing deadlines recently. Are you going through anything particularly challenging right now?"

Offer support: "I'm concerned about how you've been lately. Have you considered reaching out to OhioPHP for support?"

Be flexible: "Hey [colleague's name], I've noticed you seem a bit off lately. Is everything okay?"

Offer resources: www.ohiophp.org/mental-health



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Offering Support

Encourage a self referral to OhioPHP:

- Visit our website www.ohiophp.org and click “Make a Referral”
- Call us at (614) 841-9690
- Email us at info@ohiophp.org

All referrals are confidential



Question

If you were concerned with a
colleague, did you approach them?



Question

If not, what prevented you from
reaching out?



Fear-based Assumptions

◦ What if I'm wrong?

- *If you've established a trusting relationship, they will know that you care about them*
- *But what if you're right? Patient safety is on the line, and you could potentially save your colleague's career or their life*

◦ What if they become angry?

- *Asking questions about how they feel is a great place to start*
- *Strong emotions are common*
- *Consider offering another time to talk when they've had time to settle and process*
- *Temporary discomfort is worth it, if that means a life is saved*
- *Focus on: controlling yourself, your environment, and the conflict's boundaries*



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Fear-based Assumptions

○ I could ruin their reputation

- *Whether you approach them yourself or go to their supervisor, safe haven programs are confidential*
- *Reach out to OhioPHP if you have questions*

○ I'm worried about saying the wrong thing

- *Use the examples in this presentation to help!*

○ What if I overstep boundaries?

- *You can always involve your supervisor*
- *Rely on your workplace culture to guide your approach*

****If these fears stop you from reaching out, you can always call OhioPHP!***



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Questions?



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What's Next?



What is a Safe Haven Program?

- A clearly defined *confidential* path for individuals to seek help for burnout, mental health disorders, or substance use disorders
- A *safe space* for early intervention *before* patient safety becomes a concern
- Access to *quality* clinical screening/evaluation, treatment, long-term monitoring and support
- A *therapeutic* alternative to disciplinary action for illnesses such as mental health disorders or substance use disorders



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Who should use OhioPHP's services?

Licensees and applicants who may experience any of the following:

- Burnout
- Stress
- Substance Use Disorders
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Parkinson's Disease
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis
- Cognitive Impairment/Dementia
- Seizure Disorder
- Distressed/Disruptive Behaviors
- Other impairing conditions

(OVMLB's and OCDPB's safe haven programs do not include physical health conditions)



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Ohio Speech and Hearing Professionals Board Safe Haven Program



Safe Haven Program

Eligibility

Any OSHPB licensee or applicant who needs assistance with potential or existing impairment due to a:

- Behavioral health disorder
- Mental health disorder
- Substance use disorder
- Medical condition or illness



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Safe Haven Program

Eligibility



- Audiologist
- Audiology Aide
- Hearing Aid Dealer
- Hearing Aid Fitter
- Trainee Permit Holder
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Speech-Language Pathology Aide
- Conditional Speech-Language Pathologist

Safe Haven Program

Ineligibility



In order to protect patient safety, any licensee who is unwilling or unable to complete or comply with any part of the safe haven program, including screening/evaluation, treatment, or monitoring is deemed ineligible.



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Safe Haven Program Services

OHIO ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 4747-1-25, 4753-1-13

Services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Screening and/or evaluation for possible impairment
- Referral to treatment providers for further evaluation and/or treatment, as needed
- Establishment of an individualized treatment and recovery plan
- Ongoing case management and monitoring



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Duty to Report Impairment

If a licensee believes a colleague is suffering from a substance use disorder or physical or mental impairment, they may contact OhioPHP in lieu of making report to the regulatory board.

However, the presence of impairment shall not excuse acts or preclude investigation or disciplinary action against a participant for other violations (for example, sexual misconduct).



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Duty to Report Impairment

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The Role of OhioPHP



The Role of OhioPHP

- Determination of eligibility for safe haven programs
- Well-being screenings
- Referrals for evaluations and treatment
- Care coordination
- Chronic illness management (therapeutic monitoring)



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OhioPHP Process

1. You make a referral to OhioPHP
2. OhioPHP reaches out to the individual
3. Condition is identified and treatment recommendations are made
4. Individual goes to treatment and works with OhioPHP for chronic illness management
5. Individual stays engaged with OhioPHP and is provided ongoing support



Why are PHPs and SHPs Important?

Substance Use Disorders

- Sustained recovery from a substance use disorder for the general population is below 50% during the first year following treatment
- 90% of healthcare professionals who have completed substance use disorder treatment and monitoring, remained in sustained recovery with no relapse (OhioPHP cumulative data from 2004 - 2022)



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Safe Haven Programs

Existing Programs

- Ohio Board of Psychology
- Ohio Vision Professionals Board
- Ohio Veterinary Medical Licensing Board
- Ohio Speech and Hearing Professionals Board
- Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board
- Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Athletic Trainers Board
- State Medical Board of Ohio (known as the Confidential Monitoring Program)

Programs in Development

- Ohio Board of Nursing – **Coming Soon!**
- Emergency Medical Services Board – **Coming November 2025!**
- Ohio State Dental Board
- Ohio State Chiropractic Board



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Suicide Prevention Screening

Well-being Checkup And Referral Engagement Service

wellbeingcare.org

This screening program allows any healthcare professional in Ohio to:

- Take a brief survey to screen for mental health conditions anonymously
- Receive a personalized response from a professional counselor
- Exchange deidentified messages with the professional counselor
- Ask questions and learn about available services
- Get feedback and encouragement
- Request a referral for appropriate therapeutic support



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How to Make a Referral

If you are concerned about a colleague:

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- Call us at (614) 841-9690
- Email us at info@ohiophp.org

All referrals are confidential



So, that was a lot...

Here Is What You Need To Know

- There is a confidential program for licensees of the OSHPB. This is the safe haven program.
- Quality, professional treatment and long-term monitoring (chronic illness management) have an immensely positive impact on recovery rates (SUD).
- An OSHPB licensee's “Duty to Report” impairment is fulfilled by contacting OhioPHP.
- OhioPHP can provide screening, assessment and treatment referrals for burnout, mental health, and substance use disorders.
- ***When in doubt, call OhioPHP!***



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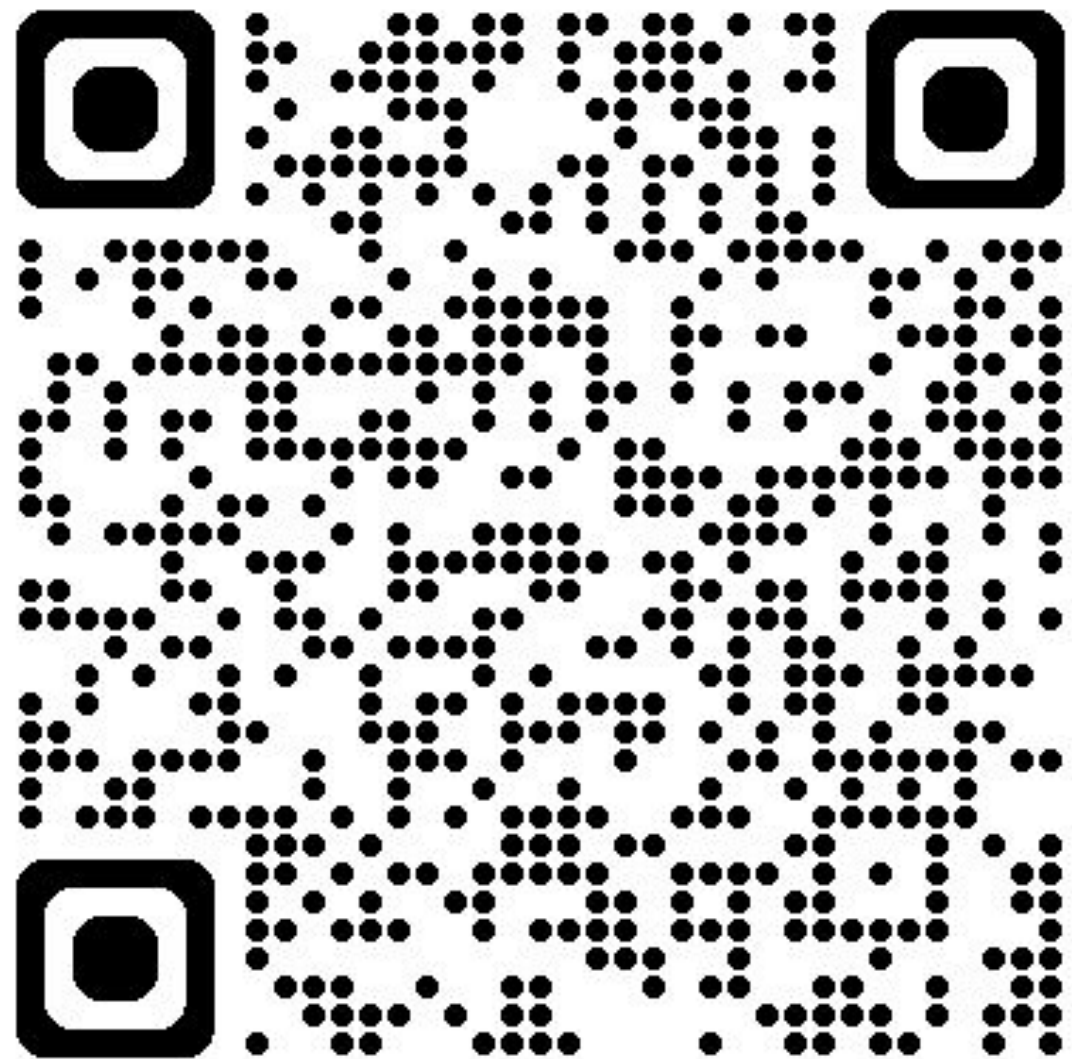
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Before We End



Please take this brief
post-test survey to help
us improve our
education program



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Thank you!



[OhioPHP.org](https://ohiophp.org)



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