

**ALABAMA BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS
ADMINISTRATIVE CODE****CHAPTER 540-X-13
ALABAMA PHYSICIAN HEALTH PROGRAM****TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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540-X-13-.01 Background.

Under the provisions of Act 88-536 of the 1988 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature, the State Board of Medical Examiners has the responsibility to promote the early identification, intervention, treatment and rehabilitation of physicians who may be impaired by reason of illness, inebriation, excessive use of drugs, narcotics, alcohol, chemicals or other substances or as a result of any physical or mental condition.

Author: Alabama Board of Medical Examiners

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975; §§34-24-400 through 406.

History: Filed December 22, 1988. **Repealed and New Rule:** Filed April 18, 2017; effective June 2, 2017.

540-X-13-.02 Alabama Physician Health Program.

In order to carry out its responsibilities under Act 88-536, the Board hereby establishes the Alabama Physician Health Program. The purpose of the program is to develop, maintain, and make available to all licensed physicians programs to render assistance to impaired physicians who voluntarily seek medical intervention, treatment and rehabilitation for their impairment. The program shall operate under the direction of the Alabama Physician Wellness Committee as established by Act 88-536. The Committee shall consist of not less than three (3) nor more than fifteen (15) physicians or osteopaths licensed to practice medicine in this State. The members of the Committee will be appointed by the Board and will serve for a term of three (3) years and will be eligible for re-appointment. The Board may remove a Committee member before the expiration of his or her three (3) year term for just cause.

Author: Alabama Board of Medical Examiners
Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§34-24-400 through 406.
History: Filed December 22, 1988. **Amended:** Filed June 18, 1992.
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540-X-13-.03 Implementing Contract.

The Board is authorized under the provisions of Act 88-536 to enter into a contractual agreement with a non-profit corporation or medical professional association for the creation of the Alabama Physician Health Program and the support of the Alabama Physician Wellness Committee.

Author: Alabama Board of Medical Examiners
Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§34-24-400 through 406.
History: Filed December 22, 1988. **Amended:** Filed June 18, 1992.
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540-X-13-.04 Physician Wellness Committee.

The Alabama Physician Wellness Committee may exercise the following functions and responsibilities:

- (a) Receiving and evaluating reports of suspected impairment from any source including referrals from the Board.
- (b) Intervening in case of verified impairment.
- (c) Referring impaired physicians to appropriate treatment programs.
- (d) Monitoring the treatment and rehabilitation of impaired physicians.
- (e) Providing post treatment monitoring and after care support of rehabilitated impaired physicians.
- (f) Rendering an annual statistical report to the Board of Medical Examiners on the activities of the Committee in such form as the Board shall specify.
- (g) Reporting to the Board any physician who in the opinion of the Committee is unable to continue in the practice of medicine or osteopathy with reasonable skill and safety to patients when it appears that such physician or osteopath is currently in need of intervention, treatment or rehabilitation

and has failed or refused to participate in programs of treatment or rehabilitation recommended by the Committee.

(h) Developing out-reach and awareness programs which promote and publicize the services available through the Alabama Physician Health Program.

(i) When requested by the Board, developing standards for evaluation of treatment facilities and evaluating and making recommendations to the Board for the approval of treatment and rehabilitation facilities and/or programs to be used by physicians referred by the Committee for treatment.

(j) Other functions and responsibilities as may be mutually agreed upon between the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, the Committee and the Board.

Author: Alabama Board of Medical Examiners

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§34-24-400 through 406.

History: Filed December 22, 1988. **Amended:** Filed June 18, 1992.

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540-X-13-.05 Policy Guidelines.

It is the purpose and intent of the Board that the Alabama Physician Health Program be a confidential nonpunitive alternative to disciplinary sanction for impaired physicians who voluntarily seek medical intervention, evaluation, treatment, counseling or rehabilitation for their impairment. To that end, the Board hereby adopts the following policy guidelines to be used by the Alabama Physician Wellness Committee in implementing the Alabama Physician Health Program:

(1) A physician voluntarily seeking the assistance of the committee for treatment of an impairment who successfully completes the recommended course of treatment and therapy and who continues to abide by the terms and conditions of the committee's after-care agreements for the period of time specified and thereafter continues to practice medicine with reasonable skill and safety and free from impairment will not be reported by the committee to the Board for violation of Code of Ala. 1975, §34-24-360(19). However, a physician participating in programs of treatment and/or rehabilitation and after-care must always truthfully answer all inquiries concerning such treatment made by employers, state or federal licensing and/or regulatory agencies, hospital medical staff credentialing bodies, courts, medical malpractice insurance carriers, and medical specialty Boards. The Physician Wellness Committee will serve as an advocate on behalf of and lend support to physicians participating in programs sponsored or

recommended by the committee before such agencies and organizations. A report by a licensed physician to the Physician Wellness Committee that such physician has reason to believe that any other licensed physician is impaired, shall be deemed to be a report to the Board of Medical Examiners for the purpose of the mandatory reporting requirements of Code of Ala. 1975, §34-24-361(b).

(2) Should the Board as a result of an investigation determine that there is cause to believe that a physician may be impaired, the Board may administratively report that fact to the committee with a request or Board Order that the individual be evaluated to determine whether an impairment exists. The Board will make available to the committee such information as is necessary to accomplish an intervention and evaluation. The committee will report its findings and recommendations to the Board and provide follow-up reports upon request.

(3) The committee must report to the Board the name of any physician the committee has reason to believe may be impaired and

(a) who has failed or refused to follow the recommendations of the committee for evaluation, treatment and/or rehabilitation, or

(b) who has discontinued such evaluation, treatment or rehabilitation against medical advice, or

(c) who has failed to abide by the terms and conditions of an after-care agreement with the committee, or

(d) whose continuation in practice, in the opinion of the committee, constitutes a threat to the safety of his or her patients or to the public.

(4) In any report to the Board of Medical Examiners made pursuant to the requirements of this rule, the committee or its authorized designee may forward to the board any and all reports, evaluations, treatment records, medical records, documents or information relevant to the physician or osteopath upon whom the report is made, unless specifically prohibited by federal law or regulation, notwithstanding any law or regulation of this state declaring that such evaluations, information, treatment records, medical records documents or reports are confidential or privileged. All such information, evaluations, documents, reports, treatment records or medical records received by the board in a report submitted pursuant to this subsection shall be privileged and confidential and shall not be public records nor available for court subpoena or for discovery proceedings but may be used by the board in the course of its investigations and may be

introduced as evidence in administrative hearings conducted by the board or by the Medical Licensure Commission.

(5) In the case of a physician who is placed under disciplinary sanction by an order of the Board of Medical Examiners or the Medical Licensure Commission or as a result of a voluntary or involuntary restriction on his or her Certificate of Qualification or license to practice medicine which requires that the physician enter into and comply with an after-care agreement with the committee, then the committee must report to the Board or to the commission, as appropriate, any violation or deviation by the physician of the terms and conditions of his or her after-care agreement.

Author: Alabama Board of Medical Examiners

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§34-24-400 through 406.

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Amended: Filed August 22, 2002; effective September 26, 2002.

Repealed and New Rule: Filed April 18, 2017; effective June 2, 2017.

540-X-13-.06 Confidentiality.

All information, interviews, reports, statements, memorandum, or other documents furnished to or produced by the Alabama Physician Wellness Committee and any findings, conclusions, interventions, treatment or rehabilitation, or other proceedings of such committee are declared to be privileged and confidential. All records and proceedings of such committee shall be confidential and shall be used by such committee and the members thereof only in the exercise of the proper function of the committee and shall not be public records nor available for court subpoena or for discovery proceedings. The Committee may disclose information relative to an impaired physician only (1) when it is essential to disclose such information to further the intervention, treatment, counseling or rehabilitation needs of the individual physician concerned and then only to such persons or organizations with a need to know, or (2) when its release is authorized in writing by the physician, or (3) when the Committee is required to make a report to the Board under rules 540-X-13-.04(g), 540-X-13-.05(3), and 540-X-13-.05(4).

Author: Alabama Board of Medical Examiners

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§34-24-400 through 406.

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540-X-13-.07 Financial Support (Repealed 6/2/17).

(REPEALED)

Author: Wendell R. Morgan

Statutory Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §20-2-50.

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