

# DOCTOR DAY 2025

*Advocacy at the Capitol*



## Clinician Health Program

### Establishing a Clinician Health Program for Wisconsin Health Care Professionals

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, physicians have higher rates of burnout, depressive symptoms, and suicide risk than the general population. Physicians and trainees can experience high degrees of mental health distress and are less likely than other members of the public to seek mental health treatment. While many employers have employee assistance programs (EAP), physicians tend to seek help from independent and trusted sources – 47 states have established such programs. Wisconsin is one of the three states without an independent Clinician Health Program (CHP).

### Clinician Health Programs Are Successful

CHPs have a record of successfully helping physicians at risk stay in the workforce and provide quality care. A Medical Professional Liability Association quarterly newsletter highlights one study reporting impressive results<sup>1</sup>:

[Physician Health Program] participants have some of the highest rates of long-term documented recovery. Additionally, a 2013 study of 818 physician health program monitored physicians revealed that physicians who completed PHP monitoring requirements had a **20% lower malpractice risk** than the matched cohort of physicians that had never been involved in the PHP. Monitored physicians also had **50% lower malpractice risk compared to their own risk before monitoring**.

### CHP KEY ELEMENTS

- Authority for the CHP to **work with regulatory boards; peer review protection**
- Allow for **voluntary assistance** and/or guidance
- **Confidentiality protections**
- **Protections for referring a colleague** to a CHP

**Bottom Line:** if you create a CHP, you can assist more professionals in need. We believe Wisconsin physicians and other high-level professional degree holders such as dentists and pharmacists can enjoy similar rates of success.

Physician groups have been working with Governor Tony Evers, the Wisconsin Dental Association, and the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin to obtain one-time funding to help create a Clinician Health Program. This independent resource for physicians, dentists, and pharmacists will assist in finding help for potential addiction, depression, and other behavioral health needs. The Wisconsin Medical Society is currently setting up a 501(c)(3) for this purpose; one-time funding from the state this biennium can greatly assist in implementation. The stretch goal for the future is to expand the program to more health care professions.

### THE ASK

Physician groups are working with numerous state legislators on a bill to create the statutory updates needed to build an effective CHP for Wisconsin. Ask your State Assembly Representative and State Senator to support the effort to create an independent Clinician Health Program.

<sup>1</sup> Medical Professional Liability Association, [https://www.mplassociation.org/Web/Publications/Inside\\_Medical\\_Liability/Issues/2022/Q2/articles/Physician\\_Health\\_Programs-Changing\\_the\\_Culture\\_of\\_Medicine.aspx](https://www.mplassociation.org/Web/Publications/Inside_Medical_Liability/Issues/2022/Q2/articles/Physician_Health_Programs-Changing_the_Culture_of_Medicine.aspx)