

Name of Organization: North Carolina Physicians Health Program

Brief Statement: The North Carolina Physicians Health Program (NCPHP) has the mission of “Encouraging the well-being and recovery of medical professionals through compassion, support, accountability and advocacy.” It has always been the sincere desire of NCPHP that medical professionals enjoy a fulfilling professional and personal life, one that is rich with the opportunity to practice the art of healing and in doing so, experience the wonder of serving one’s fellow human beings by living out the tenets of the Hippocratic Oath.

For over twenty years, NCPHP has been assisting physicians and physician assistants in addressing personal problems that may be affecting their ability to provide safe and appropriate medical care. Whether a substance use problem, mental health issue, or a difficult life problem, the staff at NCPHP is dedicated to helping physicians and physician assistants to help themselves. With the changes in medicine in recent years, however, NCPHP has seen what seems to be an ever-increasing incidence of professional burnout among medical providers.

This led to NCPHP making the decision to partner with other organizations and individuals in North Carolina to address the problem of provider burn out head on and with a goal of doing whatever we can to educate about, intervene upon, and as much as possible, prevent the professional burnout of our physicians and physician assistants. This group, the North Carolina Consortium for Physician Resilience and Retention, has already worked with the NC Medical Board and the North Carolina Medical Society in changing the NCMB physician and physician assistant relicensure question so as to hopefully decrease any concern a licensee might have that by seeking assistance for burnout or other emotional struggle, they would ordinarily have to report that assistance to the medical board.

NCPHP continues to provide a daily source of support, assistance, and advocacy to those persons who may be struggling with substance use disorders, mental illness, or other challenging problems. We believe that physicians and physician assistants are people first and providers second; therefore, if we can help them to take care of themselves then they are better able to take care of others. We provide supportive interventions designed to restore medical providers to a state of health and wholeness, then fiercely advocate for their ability to return to the practice of medicine with a renewed sense of purpose and passion. One example is that NCPHP and the North Carolina Medical Society Foundation help award scholarships to those persons who are in financial need as a result of the problem that brought them to NCPHP; to date in 2017 alone, over 100 thousand dollars of scholarship funds have been awarded through the generous contributions of licensed physicians and physician assistants.

NCPHP and our partner organizations are dedicated to making medicine a joy again for all who have dedicated their life to easing the suffering of others by application of the healing arts. We know that modern medicine is full of challenges and pressures that change on a rapid pace, but we also know that through compassion and courage, we can help physicians and physician assistants meet whatever challenges are presented to them.