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MARK BOWDEN
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Administrative rules amended for Physician Health Program

DES MOINES, IA – Administrative rules have been amended for a state program that supports physicians with mental or physical impairments, or drug and alcohol problems.

Amendments to 653 Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 14 became effective August 4. They authorize the Iowa Physician Health Committee, which oversees the Iowa Physician Health Program, to communicate to the Iowa Board of Medicine if the committee possesses reliable information that a participant's medical practice poses a significant risk to the public.

The change clarifies circumstances in which the 10-member Board of Medicine could be made aware of a physician's participation in the program, which protects the public by ensuring that an impaired physician is safe to practice medicine. There were 87 physicians in the program on August 1.

Chapter 14 has long provided that if a participant is not in compliance with their program contract, then the physician will be referred to the Board for possible disciplinary action. In addition, the committee is required to report to the Board any knowledge of a participant's violations of administrative rules or statutes that are not related to the physician's impairment.

The program has served 347 physicians since it was established in 1996. Participation is confidential to the public. Participants may be required to undergo a professional evaluation. To continue their practice of medicine, they must adhere to a strict schedule of monitoring, file progress reports and meet regularly with the committee, which is appointed by the Board.

More information about the program is available at <http://iphp.iowa.gov/> or from Deb Anglin, program coordinator, at (515) 281-6491 or deb.anglin@iowa.gov