

Definition: drug dependent person

Health Act 1937 (Qld) and Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996

Definitions

Health Act 1937 (Qld)

The Health Act, 1937 (Qld) has the following definition of drug dependent person.

“drug dependent person” means a person -

(a) who, as a result of repeated administration to the person of controlled or restricted drugs or poisons -

(i) demonstrates impaired control; or-

(ii) exhibits drug-seeking behaviour that suggests impaired control;

over the person’s continued use of controlled or restricted drugs or poisons; and

(b) who, when the administration to the person of controlled or restricted drugs or poisons ceases, suffers or is likely to suffer mental or physical distress or disorder.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 5th Edition (DSM-V), American Psychiatric Association (2013)

Substance Use Disorder

In order to be diagnosed with Substance Use Disorder the patient must meet at least 2 of the 11 criteria for the diagnosis. the criteria are very similar to those outlined in DSM-IV for abuse and dependence combined. A patient meeting 2-3 if the criteria indicates mild substance use disorder, meeting 4-5 criteria indicates moderate, and 6-7 indicates severe (APA, 2013).

Diagnostic Criteria

- Continuing to use opioids despite negative personal consequences
- Repeatedly unable to carry out major obligations at work, school, or home due to opioid use
- Recurrent use of opioids in physically hazardous situations



- Continued use despite persistent or recurring social or interpersonal problems caused or made worse by opioid use
- Tolerance as defined by either a need for markedly increased amounts to achieve intoxication or desired effect or markedly diminished effect with continued use of the same amount
- Withdrawal manifesting as either characteristic syndrome or the substance is used to avoid withdrawal
- Using greater amounts or using over a longer time period than intended
- Persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control opioid use
- Spending a lot of time obtaining, using, or recovering from using opioids
- Stopping or reducing important social, occupational, or recreational activities due to opioid use
- Consistent use of opioids despite acknowledgment of persistent or recurrent physical or psychological difficulties from using opioids
- Craving or a strong desire to use opioids.

Important caveat about tolerance and withdrawal

Patients who are prescribed opioid medications for analgesia may exhibit these two criteria (withdrawal and tolerance), but would not necessarily be considered to have a substance use disorder.