



Changes to IDFPR licensing regarding applicants' mental health and substance use disorders

The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) regulates many professions in Illinois, including physicians. Applicants seeking a professional license are required to complete a licensing application, which includes a number of questions intended to help IDFPR determine an applicant's fitness and ability to practice in his or her desired profession.

For many years, the IDFPR licensing application asked applicants whether they have *ever had* a disease or condition that limited their ability to practice in their chosen profession. In 2016, however, IDFPR significantly narrowed the scope of this question and now asks only about *current* conditions and *present* limitations.

The question asks: "Do you now have any disease or condition that presently limits your ability to perform the essential functions of your profession, including any disease or condition generally regarded as chronic by the medical community, i.e., (1) a mental or emotional disease or condition; (2) alcohol or other substance abuse; and (3) physical disease or condition. *If yes, attach a detailed statement, including an explanation whether or not you are currently under treatment.*"

This question asks only about an applicant's *current* limitations. There is no reason to disclose a past condition or even a current condition that does not cause any current limitations.

For example:

- John has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Before his diagnosis, he would have had difficulty practicing medicine. However, as a result of his current treatment regimen, he does not have any limitations in his ability to practice medicine. ***John can answer no.***
- Maria has a history of substance abuse. She does not currently use or abuse substances, and her history of using substances has no negative impact on her current ability to practice medicine. ***Maria can answer no.***
- Brian has depression. He has days when he is unable to function and expects that when he practices medicine, he will need to find a position where he can work a flexible schedule given the unpredictability of his condition. ***Brian probably needs to answer yes.***

If you have questions about your application, you can contact Meryl Camin Sosa at msosa@ilpsych.org. The Illinois Psychiatric Society thanks Rachel Weisberg of Equip for Equality for her help with making the changes to the licensure applications.

Disclaimer: The material for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice to any individual or group. Questions concerning how this material applies to any person's own situation should be discussed with that person's attorney.