

Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy

2025-2026 Student Handbook

As a recipient of federal monies, New England College of Optometry maintains a Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy, in compliance with The Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendment of 1989. The purpose of the policy is to prevent the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol and the abuse of alcohol by students.

In accordance with federal regulations, the policy contains information about the use of drugs and alcohol in relation to:

- The standards of conduct expected by the College;
- Disciplinary actions for violations of the standards;
- Legal sanctions for violating corresponding laws;
- Potential health risks;
- Accessible counseling and treatment services.

This policy will be distributed to students initially entering the College community and to all students annually. There will be a biennial review of the policy to determine its effectiveness, implement any necessary changes, and ensure the consistent application of sanctions for violations of the policy.

Although some state laws permit the use of medical and recreational marijuana, NECO must comply with federal laws regarding the use of controlled substances. Federal law prohibits marijuana use, possession, distribution, and/or cultivation at educational institutions. Such activity is therefore not allowed in any on any NECO property, nor is it allowed at any NECO-sponsored event or activity off campus or any student organization event activity.

The odor of marijuana or any other prohibited substance may suffice to constitute a violation of the below policy. All student prescription medication should be stored in its original, labeled container and kept in a secure location. Any alleged violation of the controlled substances/drugs policy will result in the immediate disposal and/or confiscation of substances and the confiscation of any prohibited devices, in addition to other appropriate sanctions.

Standards of Conduct

The College strictly prohibits, on its premises and at all College sponsored functions off campus:

- The possession, use or distribution of illicit drugs, including the inappropriate possession, use, or distribution of pharmaceutical drugs;
- The possession or consumption of alcohol by, or distribution to, persons under 21 years old.

The College reserves the right to restrict the use, distribution, or possession of alcohol on College premises or at any College-sponsored functions by persons 21 years old or older. The College also reserves the right to request age documentation before serving alcohol.

Functions planned for students by employees or students at which alcohol will be served must be pre-approved by the Dean of Academic Affairs at least one month before event. See On-Campus Event Alcohol Policy for more information.

At all College functions, non-alcoholic beverages must be provided and located in a visible area separate from alcoholic beverages. Food must always be available at all College functions where alcohol is served.

The College expects employees and students to create and maintain a professional and educational environment that is safe and healthy and encourages responsible conduct. Furthermore, the College holds employees and students responsible for the consequences of using or distributing illicit drugs, and serving or consuming alcohol.

On-Campus Event Alcohol Policy

Alcohol will only be approved for consumption or distribution at signature, institutionally-sponsored events that promote NECO-wide community building, or enhance NECO's standing in the local or optometric community.

The distribution or consumption of alcohol on campus is prohibited unless:

- At an event approved by NECO as involving alcohol;
- Where required by law or NECO policy an alcohol permit is procured from the city, or served by a licensed caterer/bartending service; and
- Following the guidelines NECO sets.

The full policy and process can be found on the Room Reservations page in the Operations section of the NECO portal.

Disciplinary Action

Reports of suspected violations of the Drug & Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy by employees and students will be responded to by College administration.

Disciplinary action will be imposed on students who violate the Drug & Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy and may include immediate suspension or dismissal from the College and affect the student's eligibility for financial aid. Please see www.FAFSA.gov for further information.

Students violating local, state, or federal laws regarding drugs and alcohol on College premises or at College functions are not exempt from the corresponding legal sanctions. Disciplinary action taken by the College for legal violations may include a referral to local authorities for prosecution, the sanctions listed above, and/or mandatory completion of an appropriate rehabilitation program as a condition of continued student status.

Legal Sanctions for Violating Alcohol Laws

A minor in possession of alcohol, who is not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, may be fined not more than \$50 for the first offense and not more than \$150 for a second or subsequent offense. The above minor may also be arrested without a warrant by a police officer and if convicted, will have their driver's license suspended for a period of 90 days.

A person who falsifies age documentation or misrepresents their age for the purpose of possessing or consuming alcohol is subject to a fine of \$300.

Anyone delivering or serving alcohol to a person under 21, or for the use by someone under 21, is subject to a fine of up to \$2,000 or imprisonment for not more than one year or both.

The fine for operating a motor vehicle while drinking an alcoholic beverage may result in a fine of not less than \$500 nor more than \$5,000 or by imprisonment for not more than two and one-half years, or both such fine and imprisonment.

A person suspected by authorities of driving under the influence of alcohol will be stopped and given a sobriety test. Failure of the test will result in immediate arrest, and revocation of one's driver's license. A first conviction for driving under the influence of alcohol may result in a fine of up to \$1000, imprisonment for up to two years, mandatory completion of an alcohol education or rehabilitation program and revocation of one's license. Sanctions for driving under the influence increase in severity with each successive conviction.

A person suspected of public intoxication may be taken into protective custody for at least 5 hours.

Legal Sanctions for Violating Drug Laws

Criminal penalties for offenses vary according to the particular substance and the quantity of the substance. Generally, the penalties for manufacturing or distributing controlled substances are greater than for simple possession.

Illegal possession with the intent to manufacture or distribute is subject to the same penalties as illegal manufacture or distribution. Possessing relatively large quantities of illicit substances will be considered possession with intent to distribute.

In general, persons suspected of possessing, using, or distributing illicit drugs will be arrested and will remain in jail until bail is met. A court date for arraignment will be set within 10 days.

Convictions for some offenses include mandatory minimum terms of imprisonment. A person sentenced to a mandatory term is not eligible for parole, furlough, or work release. Penalties for repeat offenses are increasingly harsher.

A person convicted of a drug offense may be declared ineligible for any or all federal benefits for up to one year, or longer for repeat offenses. Federal benefits include grants and contracts, and professional licenses.

Health Risks

Alcohol Abuse

- nausea & headaches
- fatigue
- malnutrition
- brain cell damage
- cirrhosis
- loss of memory
- poor concentration
- ulcers
- liver & stomach cancer
- bone degeneration
- increased heart rate
- personality disorders
- blackouts
- alcoholism
- heart disease

Illicit Drug Use

- brain, nerve & liver damage
- personality disorders
- psychosis
- respiratory arrest
- addiction
- coma
- convulsions
- heart failure
- malnutrition
- hypertension
- pulmonary edema
- death
- lowered blood pressure
- cardiac arrhythmias

Counseling and Treatment Services

All students are required to purchase or have an equivalent health insurance plan. Mental health services are considered essential health benefits and should include behavioral health treatment, behavioral health inpatient services, and substance abuse treatment. Please visit the Center for Academic and Professional Achievement to discuss insurance plans purchased through the school and local agencies providing behavioral health treatment options. For emergency service, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.

Boston Area Referral and Treatment Agencies

Listed below are randomly selected agencies providing referrals and/or rehabilitation services. The list does not represent recommendations for any particular programs. It is advisable to check with your doctor and health insurance provider for individual referrals.

- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence: provides education, information, help, and hope to the public. It advocates prevention, intervention, and treatment through a nationwide network.
- Drug & Alcohol Hotline - (800) 327-5050
- Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education - Find a treatment center, learn how to get help and information for family and friends.
- High Point - (800) 233-4478