



Nursing Service Guidelines Inpatient Behavioral Health

Title: **BODY AND BELONGINGS SEARCHES**

Purpose of Guidelines: To maintain the safety of all patients and staff and to decrease the possibility of any contraband being brought into the hospital, all patient belongings will be thoroughly searched by staff. Unit staff to secure any potential dangerous or contraband items. This routine search can be completed without a physician's order to assure safety of the unit. This is completed at time of admission and/or any time new items received during a patient's continued inpatient stay.

Procedure:

1. A search includes asking the patient to remove all items from their pockets and turn out their pockets on all jackets, shirts/sweatshirts and or pants. Patients will remove their shoes and socks to ensure that any contraband or other items are removed.
 - a. Explain to the patient what you will do and why
 - b. Explain where things will be stored and how the patient may gain access to them
 - c. The search should be conducted in a professional manner and maintain the patient's privacy and dignity during the search
 - d. Remove all items from pockets, purses, luggage, etc.
 - e. Check linings of suitcases and purses for contraband
 - f. Clothing and other items should be checked carefully
 - g. Clothing is to be unfolded and zippers unzipped; look for belts or drawstrings
 - h. Clothing with pockets and hems should be checked thoroughly for hidden items
 - i. Open toiletry containers, cosmetic cases and other items that may contain other objects and check them thoroughly
 - j. Be aware of mouthwashes, toothpaste, hygiene items with alcohol, check to assure that wells of powders, eye shadows, etc. are secure and do not have hollow bottoms
 - k. Shoes should be checked inside
 - l. Belts, shoelaces, hooded sweatshirts and drawstrings will be removed
2. Items deemed as unsafe and not for use in the facility should be sent home with family or secured to be locked in safe storage on the unit. Items deemed as potentially unsafe but are appropriate for patient supervised, periodic use should be placed in a container to be locked in the patient belongings area on the unit. All items retained in the facility's possession are to be listed on the Patient Belonging Sheet.
3. For a list of contraband items, please see Inpatient Behavioral Health Contraband Guideline.
4. Wallets, Money, and valuables will be placed in a sealed plastic bag, sealed, stored, and signed off on by University Security.
5. Admission belongings checks and form will be completed within the shift completing the admission of the patient to the unit and at any time, additional items are received.

6. Luggage, clothes, toiletries are to be checked in the following manner as well as logged on the Patient Belonging Form.
7. Weapons brought into the facility to be sent home with family. In the event that the weapon cannot be sent home it will be stored in the unit safe, and Risk Management should be notified that a weapon is on the premise. The procedure outlined in this policy describes the search/belongings check performed when a patient enters the unit, returns from emergency medical treatment or brings new belongings to the hospital. The policy covering patient searches for contraband or other safety concerns is found at Search, Seizure and Disposition of Drugs, Weapons and Potentially Harmful Items #3364-120-70.
8. Patient medications brought from home will be given to the Pharmacy to be processed. The RN will encourage the patient/guardian to take medications back home.
9. All patients will have a routine patient search conducted by a member of the staff on admission or upon return from emergency medical treatment.
10. Searches should be conducted by staff of the same sex, if possible. Two staff will be present during searches if clinically indicated.
11. Any assistive devices including eyewear, dentures, etc. brought from home will be indicated on the form.
12. At the time of discharge, items will be returned to the patient. Inpatient Behavioral Health Units will not be responsible for any belongings left behind.
 - a. Belongings left after patient is discharged:
 - i. Belongings shall be bagged and marked with patient's information, time, and date.
 - ii. Inform patient/representative that they may pick up belongings within thirty days after discharge
 - iii. If items are not redeemed within 30 days of discharge, they may be disposed of by UTMC staff.
 - iv. Under rare conditions, UTMC will assume responsibility of mailing personal items to discharged patients.

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