

# WESTCHESTER MEDICAL CENTER

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: POLICY & PROCEDURE

### Inpatient OMH Regulated Units

Manual Code: PC-6A

Page 1 of 6 pages

SUBJECT: **RESTRICTED ITEMS AND SEARCH**

EFFECTIVE: 8/2010

REVIEWED OR  REVISED date: 3/2017

**Applicable Campus:**

Poughkeepsie  
 Valhalla

**Patient population:**

Neonate       Pediatric  
 Adult       Behavioral Health       Not applicable

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### PURPOSE

To help maintain a safe and therapeutic environment. To provide staff with guidelines for searches to assure the physical and emotional safety of patients and staff.

### SCOPE

All psychiatric inpatient units, visitation areas and the psychiatric emergency department.

### RESPONSIBILITY

All Behavioral Health Unit Staff

### POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Behavioral Health Unit's (BHU's) at Westchester Medical Center (WMC) to prevent dangerous items or substances from being brought onto the secure unit except as authorized under a physician's written order. Searches are conducted to promote legitimate institutional or clinical objectives such as patient and facility safety.

- The type and scope of any search shall be reasonably related to the objective sought. The more intrusive the search, the greater the justification required.
- All searches of a patient's body must be ordered by a physician.
- Searches shall be conducted with full respect for the patient's dignity.
- Staff should not search a patient alone.
- The gender of the staff RN is not to be a factor in the search. The gender of the PCT or security staff assisting with the search must be the same as the patient.
- If possible, patients shall be informed of the intended search procedure, and efforts shall be made to enlist their verbal consent and cooperation.

### PROHIBITED ITEMS:

- The following items are not permitted, at any time, to be brought onto the inpatient units.
  - A. Alcohol
  - B. Recording devices, tapes
  - C. Glass bottles, mirrors, compacts with mirrors
  - D. Plastic bags
  - E. Matches, lighters

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Manual Code: PC-6A

2 of 6 pages

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- F. Wire hangers, rope, cord
- G. Electrical appliances with a cord
- H. Sharps (i.e. razors, tweezers, nail files, nail clippers, sewing needles, scissors, knitting and crocheting needles)
- I. Pins
- J. Toxic liquids
- K. Cell Phones
- L. Belts / straps / drawstrings / heavy boots / head coverings and scarves.
  - Drawstrings must be removed from all garments including sweatpants, sweat shirts, and hoodies.
- M. Keys
- N. Batteries
- O. Necklaces, dangling earrings

#### PROCEDURE

##### Brinn at MHRH Campus:

1. The patient will be informed that a search of belongings/clothing will be conducted
  - The patient will be asked to change into paper scrubs upon arrival
  - All belongings are searched for contraband and valuables
  - Contraband is given to Protective Services
  - Valuables are placed in a valuables envelope, envelope is signed by patient and staff member, then given to Protective Services to be stored in safe
  - Patient is given copy of valuables slip and the original is placed in the patient's medical record.

##### Psychiatric Emergency Department at Valhalla Campus:

###### 1. All Presentations/All Patients

###### Security Officers Responsibilities

- Patient is informed that a search for potentially dangerous items (contraband) and personal belongings will be conducted for safety.
- The patient is asked to empty pockets and place contents in a bin.
- The patient is asked to walk through a metal detector prior to entering the Psychiatric Emergency Department.
- Personal items are also placed through the metal detector.
- Any alert from the metal detector prompts security to identify the cause.
- Any metal item that is considered dangerous is removed from the patient and placed in a separate container.
- Weapons, alcohol and illegal substances are given to Security.

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3 of 6 pages

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#### 2. Following Security screening- Psychiatric Emergency Department staff responsibilities

- Bring patient and belongings to the triage area.
- If the patient is wearing a jacket, coat, hat or other outer garment, the patient is asked to remove those garments.
- The patient's belongings and garments are placed in a secure locker until disposition.
- If the patient is discharged all items, except weapons and illegal substances, are returned to the patient.
- If the patient is admitted all items and clothing are placed in a large paper bag and sent with the staff to the inpatient unit.
- Psychiatric Emergency Department staff sign the P.E.D. patient check-in form.

#### 3. On the inpatient unit- PCTs responsibilities

- The patient will be informed that a search of belongings/clothing will be conducted.
- All patient belongings are placed in a secure location on the unit until two staff members can conduct a complete search of items and clothing.
- All personal items are examined using a metal detector wand.
- All clothing is turned inside out.
- All pockets, collars, cuffs, hems, seams, and waistband of garments are examined.
- All shoes and socks are examined.
- All belts are removed.
- Pocketbooks and wallets will be checked for contraband and valuables such as, but not limited to identifications, checks, credit cards, and money. Patients are permitted no more than \$10 on the inpatient unit.
- Valuables are either sent home with family or are sent to the hospital safe.
- Any potentially dangerous items (including items that can produce a flame) found should be documented and removed. These items to be removed from the unit and given to Security immediately.
- The PCT completes the "Patient Belongings" sheet(s).

#### 4. On the inpatient unit-nursing responsibilities

- The RN performs a skin assessment and whole body screen: the patient removes their clothing and puts on hospital attire. All parts of the body must be visually checked for any significant physical findings including scars, bruises, tattoos, body piercing, etc. and is documented in the patient's chart.
- The RN reviews and signs the P.E.D. patient check-in form.
- Gender of RN is not a factor in the search process.

#### 5. Items given to patients by visitors

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4 of 6 pages

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- The items and clothing brought onto the nursing unit during hospitalization are given to the staff to search for contraband before the item may be given to the patient. \* Items must be placed on the "Patient Belonging Sheet"
- All items should be examined using the metal detector wand.

6. Return from leave without consent and return from leave of absence/therapeutic pass and all direct admissions from the Westchester Medical Center.

- All patients returning from a pass or leave without consent will be required to return through the Psychiatric Emergency room entrance.
- Security is notified that the patient is expected to return to the inpatient service.
- If the patient goes through the front entrance, Security will inform them that they must first go through the Psychiatric Emergency Department Security entrance (Valhalla Only).
- The patient is asked to empty pockets and place contents in a bin.
- Security will ask the patient to walk through the metal detector.
- All personal items are also brought through the metal detector.
- Any alert from the metal detector prompts security to identify the cause.
- Any metal item that is considered dangerous is removed from the patient and placed in a separate container.
- Weapons, alcohol and illegal substances are given to Security.
- The unit staff is called and the patient is escorted to his unit.
- The patient is taken to the treatment room for a skin check and whole body screen by the nurse.
- All patient belongings are placed in a secure location on the unit until staff can conduct a complete search of items and clothing.
- All personal items are examined using a metal detector wand.
- All clothing is turned inside out.
- All pockets, collars, cuffs, hems, seams, and waistband of garments are examined.
- All shoes and socks are examined.
- All belts are removed.
- Pocketbooks and wallets will be checked for contraband and valuables such as, but not limited to identifications, checks, credit cards, and money. Patients are permitted no more than \$10 on the inpatient unit.
- Valuables are either sent home with family or are sent to the hospital safe.
- Any potentially dangerous items (including items that can produce a flame) found should be documented and removed by the staff member doing the search. These items are to be removed from the unit and forwarded to Security immediately.
- If the patient has bypassed the Psych ED Security entrance and gone directly back to the unit, the unit staff will accompany the patient to the Psych ED for the security check.

# WESTCHESTER MEDICAL CENTER

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### Inpatient OMH Regulated Units

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5 of 6 pages

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7. Patients returning from therapeutic time off of the unit, (groups, school, gym, walks, medical / appointment, tests, and procedures) will be searched upon return.

- Ask the patient to empty all pockets and turn them inside out.
- If the patient is wearing a jacket, coat, hat or other outer garments, ask the patient to remove those garments.
- Removed garments shall be turned inside out, shaken out, pockets checked and hemlines examined for restricted items.
- If there is any reason to suspect that restricted items may be hidden on the patient or in the patient's undergarments, a physician must be called to determine whether or not a higher intensity search is necessary.
- Patient is observed at all times until the search process is completed.

8. Room searches after admission

- A room search is a thorough search of a patient room for potentially dangerous and restricted items. When there is a suspicion that a restricted item is on the unit or in a patient room, the room search is initiated by the Charge Nurse. A room search may include but is not limited to checking furniture in and behind drawers, bed frame and mattress, closet, bathroom, shower stall and radiator. Patients may be present during a room search.
- At the discretion of the Charge Nurse, random room searches may be performed without the patient consent.
- Any illegal drugs or weapons found during this search will be immediately given to security and a Midas report done.
- All contraband will be removed.

9. Illegal Drugs Found During a Room Search

- Upon discovery of a substance known or assumed to be an illegal drug, a nurse will assess the patient for signs of toxicity, obtain vital signs and will notify the physician and Nursing Care Coordinator.
- The MD or NCC will contact the BHU Administrative office during daily business hours. The MD or NCC will contact the Administrator-on-Call during evening, nights, and weekend hours.
- Hold on to drugs until given to police. Security takes a report and they notify Police Department.
- Any alcoholic beverages found will be disposed of in the nearest sink.
- Complete a Midas report.

10. Patients refusal of a Search

- When a patient refuses to cooperate with a search, the patient is maintained on a one to one status and a physician is notified.

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6 of 6 pages

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### **POLICY AUTHOR**

Director of Nursing

### **APPENDIX A – DEFINITIONS**

### **REFERENCES**

### **APPROVALS**

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### **Archival history:**

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