

Policy: Emergency Care Center (ECC)	
Search of Patient and Visitor Belongings	
Developed By: [Hospital] Emergency Care Center Caregivers, Directors & Public Safety Department	Origination Date of Policy: Reviewed Dates: Reviewed with Revision Effective Date:
Policy Owner:	Approved by: _____, Director of Emergency Services Approved by: _____, Chief of Public Safety
Applicability: All [Hospital] Caregivers	Approved by: _____, Chief of Emergency Medicine Approved by: _____, VP Patient Care Services, CNO/COO
Keywords: Search, Safety Risk, Contraband, Illegal and Dangerous Items, Section 12(a), Visitors	

Policy

Through conduction of patient and visitor searches in the discovery of illegal and/or dangerous items, the [Hospital] Emergency Care Center (ECC) strives to maintain a safe and therapeutic environment that promotes the safety, well-being and recovery of all patients. In addition, the ECC will make every effort to protect patients from the risk of deliberate self-harm and suicide. The ECC is also committed to providing a safe workplace and environment for patients, visitors and workforce members.

All searches will be conducted with respect for the person’s dignity and, if searching of a patient, such search will be within the guidelines of the patients’ rights. Any item, including contraband or dangerous items that are discovered which may be detrimental to the care or safety of patients, poses a threat to workforce members or which may interfere with orderly flow of patient care and/or organizational operations of [Hospital] Hospital, may be taken by the designated employee and removed, secured and returned at discharge.

Definitions

Search – In the [Hospital] Emergency Care Center environment, this type of search involves searching clothing and belongings in an effort to identify, remove, and secure contraband. It does NOT involve physically touching the patient. Forced removal of a patient’s clothing is prohibited unless there is compelling clinical evidence, which includes physician or clinician input, that there is imminent risk of harm to themselves, or others and all other reasonable alternatives have been exhausted.

Workforce Members – To include all staff at [Hospital].

Contraband/Dangerous Materials – For the purpose of this situation, contraband is generally defined as: Any items that are illegal at the city, county, State, and Federal level and are therefore prohibited that includes intoxicants, flammable items, explosives, narcotics, and/or drug paraphernalia. Prohibited items include those that may be legal to possess outside of the

[Hospital] facilities, but pose a potential threat or risk of harm to self and others, but are not limited to the following:

- Any items deemed unsafe or inappropriate by a staff member
- Firearms of any type
- Law enforcement officers who present to the Emergency Department on-duty, with or without a patient, are allowed to carry a firearm. In the event the officer is off-duty and/or requiring medical attention, please call Public Safety; and a security officer will respond to assist with the firearm and place it in a lockbox until the officer is discharged. Civilians that possess an LTC are NOT permitted to carry anywhere on campus.
- Any sharp objects with points or edges: knives, razors, scissors, metal nail files
- Lighters/matches, cigarettes and other smoking materials (including E- cigarettes, vape pens)
- Needles
- Medications, alcohol

Visitor – Any person who is not currently engaged in direct care of the patient including but not limited to: a spouse, a domestic partner, another family member or a friend.

Required Criteria for Procedure

A. The [Hospital] strives to create and maintain a safe environment for patients, staff and visitors and therefore, anyone entering the hospital may not be in possession of contraband. (See policy 2013 “searching for contraband”).

B. All patients and visitors entering the hospital through the main entrances of the Emergency Care Centers (ECC) on both the [XXX] and [XXX] campus as well as ambulance bays will be screened through a metal detector and/or using the handheld metal detecting wand.

C. Situations in which a patient may require a conducted search may include:

1. All patients on Section 12(a).
2. Patient who screens positive for suicidal and/or homicidal ideations, threat or intent.
3. The patient is uncooperative with the medical or psychiatric evaluation due to agitation, incoherence, and/or disorganization and there is a reasonable belief the patient will harm self or others.
4. The patient has a history of possessing contraband or dangerous items and there is reasonable belief the patient will use the item(s) to harm self or others.
5. The patient has a history of inflicting harm to themselves or others and there is a reasonable belief that the patient will harm again.
6. The patient indicates, verbally or nonverbally, that they are in the possession of an item(s) that could be used in a dangerous fashion against them or others.
7. The patient threatens, verbally or nonverbally, to harm them self or others.
8. The patient harms another person or damages Hospital property.
9. All patients who either request or are referred to Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES) for evaluation (refer to Section D)

D. Situations in which a visitor may require a more thorough search may include:

1. There is a reasonable belief the visitor is in possession of contraband or dangerous items.
2. The visitor indicates, verbally or nonverbally, that they are in possession of an item(s) that could be used in a dangerous fashion against them or others.

3. The visitor threatens, verbally or nonverbally, to harm them self or others.
4. The visitor harms another person or damages Hospital property.
5. A patient's clinical condition changes unexpectedly following visitation.
6. Workforce members note and report to treating clinical team of signs of opioid overdose or misuse by a patient following outside visits.
7. Visitors that meet the search criteria and refuse a search or are found to be carrying harmful or potentially dangerous items that interferes with the orderly flow of patient care and organizational operations as a result of a search are subject to reasonable restrictions or limitations of their visitation privileges.
Visitors that refuse to pass through the metal detector screening area and/or refuse to be screened with a hand-held metal detector will NOT be allowed access to the patient care areas of the ED and will be required to remain in the waiting area.

E. Patients (be it either adult or pediatric) who present both voluntary and involuntary and meet the search criteria are to follow the appropriate steps before being seen by an ED provider, PES and/or clinician for the safety of the staff.

1. Public Safety will be notified of patients meeting criteria and sent to the ECC to search patients of potential contraband.
2. Patient will be informed of reasoning for the search and requested to undress and be placed into hospital attire (gown, pants, non-slip socks). A Medical Provider may also request that patients remove clothing if appropriate to conduct a medical screening exam.
3. All personal belongings (including cellphones) will be removed from the patient and will be logged on a "Patient Belonging Inventory Form" (See attachment) and placed in a secure area.
4. The primary nurse must make sure the inventory forms are completed and signed into the patient folder. The nature and reason for the search should then be documented in the patients' Electronic Medical Record.
5. All patient medications should be bagged and placed in the patient slot until they can be sent to the pharmacy if the patient is to be admitted.

F. Emergency Care Center Visitation

1. The Emergency Care Center maintains the right to limit the numbers of visitors, and will keep a log of all visitor names if a patient is under Section 12(a). Public Safety will present visitor name to the primary care nurse and/or charge nurse to allow or restrict the right to gain entry to the department. See Process: Visitor Searches
 - i. Patients may decline or withdraw consent to see a visitor at any time.
 - ii. Full and equal visitation privileges consistent with the wishes of the patient are supported. [Hospital] does not restrict or deny visitation privileges on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.
 - iii. Patients' requests to have a visitor present at the bedside during a treatment or procedure will be respected provided that the safety of patients and visitors can be maintained.
 - iv. Reasonable restrictions or limitations on patient visitation may be applied as appropriate to the clinical circumstances in collaboration with the patient and family and clinical team. Reasonable restrictions may be based upon various reasons, including, but not limited to:
 - a) a court order limiting or restraining contact;
 - b) behavior of a visitor that places a patient, hospital staff or others at risk of harm;

- c) threatening behavior on the part of a visitor;
- d) disruptive behavior that threatens the functioning of the patient care unit involved;
- e) risk of infection to a patient by a visitor or to a visitor by a patient; vi. a patient's need for privacy or rest;
- f) visitation that interferes with or does not allow for care of the patient and/or other patients.
- g) visitor age (Minors should be accompanied by an adult other than the patient)
- h) Visitor restrictions may be implemented as necessary by the Infection Control department on a unit wide basis in the setting of community based communicable disease outbreaks.
- i) Additional unit based restrictions may be implemented.

2. Patients and visitors will be re-screened upon exit and re-entry of the department.

No changes to this policy may be made in isolation or independently.

A. Every attempt will be made to provide a private space for patient searches.

B. Patients will be asked to remove all clothing and will be provided with hospital clothing (Gowns, pajama bottoms, non-slip socks) to maintain the patients' dignity.

C. All patients requiring a search by Public Safety should be changed into hospital attire and personal items secured before the patient utilizes the bathroom.

Entity/Department Specific Procedures

D. The Clinical staff is responsible for ensuring patients have removed all personal clothing.

E. Public Safety is responsible for "wandering" the patient after the patient has undressed and searching the patient's belongings. Public Safety is also responsible for inventorying and securing patient belongings. However, Public Safety may be present at any time during the process depending on the patient's willingness to cooperate with clinical staff.

F. Patients should be present when their belongings are searched and informed about what was removed, why it was removed, where it will be kept and when they will get it back.

G. Patient Belonging Form is to be completed by the clinical staff and all efforts should be made to have the patient acknowledge and sign the completed form.

H. In the event a patient refuses to undress, staff will escalate the situation involving Public Safety and Police as needed.

Supplemental Materials

Patient Belongings Inventory

References

None.