

	<b>530.914.500.010 Searching Patients For Potentially Dangerous Items or Contraband</b>
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## INTERDISCIPLINARY MANUAL

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### 530.914.500.010 SEARCHING PATIENTS FOR POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ITEMS OR CONTRABAND

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#### POLICY:

Patient searches will be performed in circumstances where there is a concern for the safety of the patient, staff or visitors.

#### GUIDELINES:

- Ensuring a safe environment for patients, families and staff is of the utmost importance

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## 530.914.500.010 Searching Patients For Potentially Dangerous Items or Contraband

- Searches will be conducted in a manner that shows respect for patients' privacy and dignity, and is sensitive to the therapeutic environment.
- Searches will be conducted:
  - In the ED, when staff has concern for the safety of the patient, staff or visitors and/or the patient is placed on a Form 1.
  - During the Admission process to the Inpatient Mental Health Unit (IPMH).
  - Upon a patient's return from a pass to IPMH.
  - At any time there is concern that the health, safety and security of any patient, staff or visitors is compromised.

### **EXPECTED OUTCOME:**

To help ensure a safe environment for patients, staff and visitors, potentially dangerous/contraband items will be removed in a timely manner and stored in a secure location.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Form 1:** This form authorizes the apprehension and detention of the person named on the form in a psychiatric facility, for a maximum of 72 hours. This is also known as an Application by Physician for Psychiatric Assessment.

**Dangerous/Contraband Items:** May include, but are not limited to:

- any medications, illicit or unknown substances
- any sharp objects (nail clippers, nail files, scissors, knives)
- mirrors, glass bottles
- belts
- plastic bags

**Search:** Systematically looking through patients' pockets, shoes, coat and purse. It is helpful to start at the head of the patient and move downwards towards the feet.

### **PROCEDURES:**

#### **1. Conducting a Search:**

- Inform patient that a search of their belongings is required for safety reasons
- Ask patient to voluntarily hand-in any dangerous/contraband items
  - "Can you show me what is in your pocket?" (one at a time)
  - "I am going to look through your bag."
- Belts, scarves, hoodie/pant strings and shoe laces will be removed at clinicians discretion based on the patient level of risk

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## **530.914.500.010 Searching Patients For Potentially Dangerous Items or Contraband**

- All dangerous/contraband items will be removed, placed in a bag, labeled and stored securely as per department protocols. Patient belongings will be transferred with patient chart
- If any illicit substance is found; refer to internal policy 310.914.916.065 Suspected Illicit Substances Drugs on Markham Stouffville Hospital Property.

### **2. In the Emergency Department:**

- Patient's belongings will be checked by a security officer in the presence of another staff member (Nurse or Crisis Worker).
- Patients remain in their own clothing but are required to empty out all pockets for the removal of dangerous/contraband items. Any outer garments should be removed.
- Patients on a Form 1 will be informed of the need to change into hospital clothing.
- Patient's valuables (i.e. wallet, credit cards, and jewelry) may be retained by the patient after first being thoroughly checked by staff and any potentially dangerous articles removed. Patient will be informed that the hospital is not responsible for any items they choose to retain.
- All items removed from the patient are to be placed in a plastic bag, labeled and tied/secured in front of the patient and retained at the Nursing station until such a time when the patient is discharged from the Emergency Department or transferred to another unit for admission.
- If the patient is admitted to another unit, the accompanying staff (RN, Security) will transfer the patients sealed belongings to the admitting unit and ensure the patients' belongings are provided to the admitting RN. The admitting RN will be responsible for determining with the Treatment team the most appropriate disposition of the patients' belongings.
- The transferring and receiving nurse will document the disposition of patient's belongings on the Health Care Record

### **3. In the Inpatient Mental Health Unit**

- The Admitting nurse searches the patient's belongings with a second nurse particularly when valuables are being searched.
- All dangerous items/contraband will be removed. All patients are encouraged to limit personal belongings and valuables. Sharps will be labeled and placed in a bag in patients' belongings box at nursing station.

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## **530.914.500.010 Searching Patients For Potentially Dangerous Items or Contraband**

- Cell phones, laptops, tablets, ipods and other electronic devices are not to be used in the IPMH department and should be taken home by family whenever possible.
- Staff will perform an environmental scan for potentially dangerous items twice daily as part of their patient assessment.
- Any items bought in for patients by visitors will be searched for dangerous articles.
  - a. **In PICU:**
    - All patients in PICU are to be wearing hospital provided gowns/pajamas at all times. Patients will be provided non-skid socks/slippers upon their arrival and as needed.
    - Patient belongings must be labeled and are to be kept in the lockers in the nursing station. All other belongings must be returned home with family/supports.
  - b. **Step Down:**
    - Patients in Step Down may have limited clothing - shirt, pants (no belt), sweater (no strings) underwear, socks, slippers (no shoe laces).
    - Patient belongings should be limited to a few changes of clothing and personal items that are considered safe and are to be labeled and kept in the lockers in the nursing station. All other belongings must be returned home with family/supports.

### **DOCUMENTATION:**

The following information will be documented in the patient's health record. See Patient Valuables and Personal Belongings policy.

- Items retrieved from patient using non-specific descriptors i.e. yellow ring instead of gold ring, blue stone instead of sapphire
- Person who completed the search and the name of a witness to the search
- Location in the department/disposition of belongings removed
- Time belongings returned to patient or their family

### **REFERENCE(S):**

Policy 270.914.917.025 Patient Valuables and Personal Belongings

Policy 310.914.916.065 Suspected Illicit Substances (Drugs) On Markham  
Stouffville Hospital Property – Process for Handling

Policy 530.501.050 Recording Devices in the Inpatient Mental Health Unit (1Wf)

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**ENDORSEMENT(S):**

Mental Health

Security

Emergency Department

Risk Management

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**Page: 5 of 5**