



QUINTE HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

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Nursing – Management of Dangerous or Illegal Substances and Articles

Title: Nursing – Management of Dangerous or Illegal Substances and Articles		Policy No:	3.16.1
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Department:	Corporate	Policy Lead:	Clinical Educator Mental Health
Approved By:	Quality and Patient Safety April 10, 2013 Nursing Practice Committee May 7, 2013		

1. Policy

Quinte Healthcare Corporation (QHC) is committed to providing a safe and therapeutic environment. In keeping with this commitment, illegal or potentially dangerous substances or articles will not be permitted in the hospital. It may be necessary to search items brought into the hospital by a patient or visitor if it is believed the health, safety and/or security of patients, staff or visitors could be compromised. When a search is conducted it will be done in a manner that respects the dignity of the patient/visitor and will be carried out in a manner sensitive to the therapeutic environment.

Illegal substances will include, but are not limited to: marijuana, cocaine, hashish, and heroin. Dangerous articles will include but are not limited to: knives, guns, scissors and syringes.

2. Purpose

To support the provision of a safe and therapeutic environment for patients, visitors and staff of QHC.

To define what would be considered as dangerous or illicit substance/article and actions taken when they are found.

3. Procedure

1. Patients who present at or are admitted to QHC and are found to possess dangerous or illegal substance(s) will have those items removed by the clinical staff in attendance. If there is any reason to suspect an disclosed dangerous weapon call security and/or local police

2. Patients presenting to the emergency department on a Form 1 will have their clothing and belongings removed by clinical staff in the presence of a witness authorized by QHC. All belongings will be removed and stored in a place that is inaccessible to the patient as per Policy 3.7.1.

3. Patients on admission to Mental Health Services:

- will be asked that all belongings be searched at time of admission: the same process will occur if bringing items/belonging into the hospital on return from time away from the hospital.
- visitors bringing in items/ belongings for the patient will be asked by staff to allow for a search of the items/belongings.
- searches of patients and/or belongings will be conducted with their consent unless reasonable and probable grounds exist which indicate that a patient may be in possession of a dangerous substance/article that without the search may result in harm to self or others. Voluntary patients may refuse to consent to a search.
- if the search is deemed justified by reasonable and probable cause the refusal may result in discharge from hospital if the psychiatrist assesses the patient to not be requiring further psychiatric assessment.
- whenever possible the patient should be present during the search of belongings.
- room searches should be completed with the patient present. All searches should be conducted by at least 2 staff members.
- documentation will include the names of the staff involved in the search, reason for the search, and the outcome.
- searches will be respectful of the patient and completed discreetly.

4. WHEN ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES ARE FOUND

- if police are present at time of the seizure hand over the substance for disposal.
- if police are not present, seize the illegal substance(s) and with a witness observing, place in an appropriate sized envelope, seal and sign along with the witness on the closure of envelope and place in a locked secure location.
- notify the local police to pick up the illegal substance. Due to confidentiality at no time may you disclose the name of the patient from whom the substance was seized.
- notify the appropriate manager.
- complete the electronic event reporting system and document in electronic health record.

5. WHEN DANGEROUS ARTICLES ARE FOUND

- remove the article explaining the reason of protecting the health safety and security of patients, visitors and staff as reason for removal.
- lock the article in a secured location as identified by your program.
- notify the appropriate manager.

- complete the electronic event reporting system and document in the electronic health record.
- on discharge the clinical team will discuss with the patient the most appropriate disposition of the article i.e. whether the safest action is to return the item.
- document disposition in electronic health record.

APPENDICES AND REFERENCES:

References:

Mental Health Act of Ontario, November 1, 2004. Queen's Printer for Ontario Office.
January 2009

Searches: Person and property. Infoguide. www.ppao.gov.on.ca
Psychiatric Patient Advocacy