Searching of Patients and Patient Areas
Policy # 100.25

Richmond State Hospital Policy states that we reserve the right to conduct searches of person, area and/or grounds to preserve a safe environment for all.
Incidents Triggering a Search

- Return from therapeutic leave
- Unauthorized leave
- Grounds privileges
- According to guidelines written in specific policies
- When a person is found to be under the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs
- If there is reasonable cause to believe someone has contraband or property that does not belong to them
Contraband

Any item that may be a risk to patient or others safety and/or not authorized. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Matches
- Lighters
- Paraphernalia
- Sharp objects
- Razors
- Knives
- Guns
- Other weapons that could cause injury
- Personal medications
- Street drugs
- Alcoholic beverages and/or any substance
- Cell phones
Personal Searches

- Preliminary searches of a person are to be conducted under an RN’s supervision.

- A physician’s order will be obtained authorizing the search if the patient refuses to comply with requests.
Personal Searches

- Two staff persons **must** be present during a search of a patient or their belongings.
- Staff conducting search should be of the same gender or acceptable gender based on the client’s preference.
- Personal searches are to be conducted in private and in a professional, respectful manner.
Areas to Search

Patients should be searched thoroughly and completely from head to toe.
Head

- Check hair
- Pony tails
- Braids
- Hair ties/head bands
- Rubber bands
- Ears
- Earrings
- Headphones
Mouth and Nose

- Visually inspect tongue (on top and underneath)
- Cheeks
- Dentures
- Partial plates/retainers
- Visually inspect both nostrils
Neck

- Shirt collars (inside and under)
- Necklaces
- Lockets
- Scarves
- Hats/Hoods
Torso

- Around bra
- Check bra fasteners
- Under arms
- Gloves
- Shirt pockets
- Shirt hems

wristband
Waistline

- Belts
- Pull shirt out
- Underwear band
- Belt buckles
Pockets

- Check all pockets
- Pull out all pocket linings
- Don’t forget small pockets (watch pockets in jeans)
- Check all seams/hems
Legs and Feet

- Pat down calves
- Remove shoes
- Remove socks and turn inside out
- Remove insoles from shoes
- Cuffs/hems in pants
Purses/Bags/Packages

- All of the above must be opened and fully searched
- Check all seams, linings and compartments thoroughly
- Make sure all sealed packages have not been tampered with
- If clothes in suitcases are being searched, unfold socks, check all pockets, seams, hems and compartments on all articles of clothing
Remember:

- Wear gloves
- Have patient remove items from pockets and bags as necessary for safety purposes
- The person completing the search should be the same gender
- If patient refuses; call the nurse immediately
- If anything is questionable; contact the nurse
If Patient Refuses to Comply with Procedure:

- Keep client within eyesight
- Contact nurse
- Physician’s order will need to be obtained
- If immediate patient safety is in question, the physician or OD may take appropriate action
Documentation

- Document in patients chart;
  - date, time and location of the search
  - information shared with the patient prior to the search
  - reason for and result of the search
  - patient response and actions taken
  - specify the type of contraband found and what was done with it after removed

- Incident/Injury report SF 46009 is to be completed if contraband is found
What to do With Contraband That is Found:

- All materials seized during the search will be tagged/labeled/and bagged with the patient’s name, unit assigned and the date and time it was recovered.
- All contraband will be disposed of/secured as appropriate per Security
Room Searches:

Whenever possible, patient room searches should be conducted with the room’s occupants present. However, if a patient is uncooperative, they may be removed to another location for the duration of the search. A search may be conducted without the person present if staff has reasonable cause to believe a dangerous item may be hidden in the room.
Room Searches:

A systematic inspection should be made of the room and its contents. Non-contraband articles must be put back in an orderly manner.

Common areas such as day rooms, hallways, bathrooms, activity rooms, etc. may be searched without restriction.
Guidelines for Room Searches:

- No patient is to be alone during this process!
- All patients will be located in the activity room and the dayroom is to be searched first.
- After the dayroom has been searched, patients will then be moved to the dayroom and the activity room will be searched.
- Patients will remain in the dayroom and leave only with a staff escort.
- Once patients are all in dayroom, individual search of patients/bedrooms/lockers will begin.
Guidelines for Room Searches:

- Patients will be checked off on the DWSR as the search of the patients/bedrooms/lockers is completed.
- Patients that have been searched will wait in the activity room and not leave that room without staff escort until all individual searches have been completed.
- When all patients are out of the dayroom and in the activity room, the dayroom will be searched again.
- Patients will then be moved to the dayroom and the activity room will be searched one last time.
- Entries will be made in all patient charts that unit search was conducted and if contraband was found for specific patient.
Search Tips

- Have all the tools you might need in a search:
  - Protective gloves
  - Flashlight
  - Probe, such as wire to probe into drains
  - Log sheet to document information and any contraband
- Put on your gloves before doing the search
- Look under furniture for items that may have been stuck there
- Look for evidence of tampering with bolts or screw in the furniture
Search Tips

- Inspect the walls, floor and ceiling, checking superficially to see whether mortar or other surfaces have been disturbed
- Examine interior windows, heat and air ducts and floor drains
- Examine shelves and all articles on or in them
- Check all bars and crossbars for evidence of tampering
Search Tips

- Look under the rim of the washbowl and toilet thoroughly and check the floor drain
- Examine the rest of the washbowl and toilet thoroughly
- Check into the toilet bowl with your hands or a probing instrument
- Check all locks to be sure they are working properly
- Leaf through books and papers
Search Tips

Examine the mattress and pillow as follows:

- Examine seams to see if they’ve been ripped open or re-sewed
- Look for any cuts in them
- Run your hand over both sides feeling for hard objects such as drugs, lighters and so on
- Replace worn or damaged item
Search Tips

- Examine personal possessions, including hygiene and sanitary items.
- Overlook nothing. Simple things like a box of kleenex, a tube of toothpaste, or a deodorant stick can be used to hide contraband.
- Check battery compartments as well as inside tape decks, speakers and video game boxes.
While searching, remember some of our patients have a history of swallowing objects, some of them not always small.
Virtually any object small enough to pass through the pharynx may be swallowed.

Items commonly ingested include:

- Coins
- Pencils/Pens and Pen Caps
- Batteries (square like 9V, cylindrical, or disc shaped watch batteries)
- Safety Pins
- Hairpins
- Long objects such as toothbrushes, spoons, etc.
- Sharp objects like paperclips, toothpicks, needles,
A lighter, multiple sewing needles, and pieces of glass in the bowel.
A butterknife and a lighter in the stomach
CT of the neck showing the right limb of an open safety pin extending through the posterior wall of the pharynx and lying just 7 mm away from the internal carotid artery.
A portion of the 227 metal objects removed from one man’s stomach (multiple razor blades, keys, broken eating utensils, small batteries, buttons, wires, chains, wall hooks, nails, screws, metal washers, paperclips, and other random sharp pieces of metal.)
When working with patients who have a history of swallowing objects, it is extremely important to identify swallowing risks on the units and patient areas.
When conducting searches in rooms of patients at risk, look for the following:

- Missing screws from room light covers and other furniture
- Batteries (ALL shapes and sizes)
- Paperclips and other sharp objects
- Broken plastic from cases or other objects
- Wires, laces, or string
- Long objects like toothbrushes, flatware or pencils
When in doubt about whether a patient might be at risk for swallowing an object, secure the item or close off the area to the patient and refer to Treatment Team guidelines and speak to the unit RN and/or Doctor.
Be thorough, systematic and complete during any search, always with 2 staff.

Never use searches to harass patients.

If you discover contraband, do not stop the search to report it. Just inventory it and continue to search the room until completely done.

When you have completed a search, put non-contraband items back in reasonable order.

Any contraband or notable damage to state property that is found should be documented in an Incident Report.
Thank you for completing this inservice on **Searching of Patients and Patient Areas**

Please print this slide only, print/sign your name, and send to Staff Development for recording in your training file.

___________________    _____________________
Print Name                               Signature

___________________
Date