



BRYLIN HOSPITALS, INC.

POLICY & PROCEDURES

Policy Title	Inspection of Recipient and Recipient’s Belongings for Contraband/Valuables
Policy Number	CL
Policy Owner	Vice President of Patient Care Services
Approved By	Chief Executive Officer
Effective Date	(This replaces policy NSG.33.1, <i>Inspection of Patient Belongings for Contraband/Valuables</i>)
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NYS Mental Hygiene Law, Section 7.25 – Safety (https://codes.findlaw.com/ny/mental-hygiene-law/mhy-sect-7-25.html) • NYS Mental Hygiene Law, Article 33 (33.01-33.25) – Protection of Patient Rights (https://codes.findlaw.com/ny/mental-hygiene-law/mhy-sect-33-01.html) • 14 NYCRR Part 27 Quality of Care and Treatment (http://nyrules.elaws.us/nycrr/title14_chapterii_subchapterb_part27) • Frances Abela-Dimech, Kim Johnston, Gillian Strudwick. Development and Pilot Implementation of a Search Protocol to Improve Patient Safety on a Psychiatric Inpatient Unit. Clin Nurse Spec. Mar/Apr 2017;31(2):104-114. (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28169898/) • Criteria for searches to maintain safety in an inpatient unit (https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/key-staff/chief-psychiatrist/chief-psychiatrist-guidelines/criteria-or-searches-maintain-safety-in-inpatient-unit-for-patients-visitors-staff)

Date Policy Reviewed	6/10/21							
Date Policy Revised								

I. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of BryLin Hospitals, Inc. (“BryLin”) to inspect all recipients and recipients’ belongings for contraband and/or items of value at the time of admission to the unit, during routine room checks, and at times determined necessary for items that may compromise recipient safety. BryLin recognizes that recipients have a right to privacy and dignity, and to be free from unreasonable searches. Recipients, workforce member, and visitors have the right to a safe and therapeutic environment which, under certain circumstances, necessitates taking steps to ensure recipients are not harming themselves and are not in possession of items that may present a hazard to personal safety or the therapeutic environment. By banning contraband items BryLin, as a facility, is seeking to enhance the safety of all who come to our facility.

(See also policy ADM-002, *Management of Patient’s Personal Effects*)

II. SCOPE

All Admissions and Inpatient workforce members that have a clinical title of RN, LPN, MHT.

III. DEFINITIONS

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- A. Search: The examination of a recipient's living area, belongings or person for the purpose of locating and removing contraband.
- B. Body search: A search in which a recipient disrobes under the direct observation of two workforce member of the same gender as the recipient, and, where necessary, with the assistance of a workforce member. This search may also involve inspection of the recipient's removed clothing and any items contained therein. This type of search may also involve the removal of the recipient's shoes, socks, coat and hat; visual inspection of the recipient's mouth and ears; and inspection of the recipient's hair, items in the recipient's pockets, and any other articles in the recipient's possession.
- C. Cavity search: A search in which a physician conducts a visual and/or physical examination of a recipient's rectal and/or vaginal cavities.
- D. Room/Belonging search: A search in which a workforce member examines a recipient's belongings and/or sleeping quarters.
- E. Reasonable suspicion: Facts, physical and mental signs, symptoms and behaviors or patterns of behavior leading a workforce member to reasonably conclude the observed condition or behavior has caused concealment by an Individual. It is not a generalized belief or "gut feeling". A reasonable suspicion is more than a hunch; it is a reasoned conclusion from objective observations of the individual.
- F. Contraband: Any item that is illegal, construed as being a weapon, flammable, combustible, or otherwise potentially dangerous or inappropriate to the hospital setting. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Illicit drugs and alcohol
 - 2. Firearms
 - 3. Ammunition
 - 4. Knives and other sharp objects
 - 5. Lighter fluid
 - 6. Fireworks/flares
 - 7. Tobacco and tobacco products
 - 8. Marijuana
 - 9. Any string/floss greater than six inches
- G. Workforce: Workforce means employees, volunteers, trainees, and other persons whose conduct, in the performance of work for BryLin or a business associate of BryLin, is under the direct control of BryLin, whether or not they are paid by BryLin or a business associate of BryLin.

IV. PROCEDURE

- A. General
 - 1. Prohibited items which are considered a danger or potential danger to recipients or others shall either be banned from the facility, used only under direct supervision of a workforce member and locked in a secure location when not in use, and only be allowed if considered appropriate or necessary for the proper care or therapeutic intervention of individual recipients by the Treatment Team.
 - 2. Searches (visual body check) of recipients for self-harm or injuries and their living areas (room checks) are permitted in order to prevent possession of potentially dangerous items or to recover stolen or missing property (belongings check).
 - 3. When it is necessary to conduct a search, it will be carried out in a professional and courteous manner recognizing the intrusion to personal privacy when a search occurs.
 - a. When working with recipients who have been victims of physical or sexual abuse, workforce member should request guidance or assistance from other clinical workforce member to minimize potential adverse effects.

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5. Ask the recipient to remove all clothing except underwear so that the clothing can be examined by a workforce member to ensure it does not contain dangerous or inappropriate items.
6. Ensure that only part of the clothing is removed at any one time.
7. Recipients must not be physically handled during this process.
8. Where there are **reasonable grounds** to suspect that the recipient has concealed a potentially harmful object or substance in their underwear, a search of the underwear may be required.
 - a. Such a search needs to be **authorized by the in-house physician with a written order.**
 - b. Personal dignity and gender sensitivity are to be maintained while the recipient removes their underwear so a search of the underwear can take place. Appropriate arrangements should be made to ensure recipient modesty in such circumstances. This may include providing a dressing gown, towel or new underwear. Every effort should be made to prevent this from being a debasing experience for the recipient.
9. Remove any items that may pose a risk of safety to the recipient or others.
10. Store or dispose of items appropriately.

E. Search of a patient's room or belongings (Room Check/Belongings Checks)

1. The safety of workforce members conducting the search is of utmost importance.
2. Consider the need to wear appropriate protective clothing (for example, gloves).
3. When searching belongings, ask the patient to empty containers (such as pockets, bags or backpacks) and ask him or her to disclose any dangerous or inappropriate items.
4. Never put your hands blindly into areas that you cannot see or cannot see into, for example, bags, pockets or the sides of couches.
5. Remove any dangerous or inappropriate items and either dispose of them or store them appropriately in accordance with policy **ADM-002, *Management of Patient's Personal Effects.***
6. On completion of a room search, assist the patient to re-organize his/her room.

F. Documentation

1. Documentation that search procedures have been conducted will be entered into Nursing Supervisor Reports, and the room check binder. If contraband is found an Incident Report form must be completed and forwarded to the QI/RM Leader. Additionally, documentation will be entered into recipient's medical record whenever contraband is found or when searches are conducted in accordance with a physician's orders. Documentation entered on Assessment 2 of 4 or in Nursing Section of the medical record will include:
 - a. the reasons for the search
 - b. whether and how patient consent was obtained
 - c. workforce member involved in the search
 - d. actions taken (description of the search)
 - e. the outcomes of the search
 - f. whether a debriefing was offered and accepted
 - g. Arrangements for storing or disposing of any objects or substances found.
2. All supervisory personnel are to be well versed in the definitions of contraband materials and monitor all workforce members, recipients and visitors for compliance. Non-compliant

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behaviors are to be reported to the next level of management and the QI/RM Leader for review and further action/investigation.