

Smudging Ceremonies

POLICY:

Pembroke Regional Hospital (PRH) will support and respectfully facilitate cultural and spiritual indigenous healing practices, including those ceremonies that involve the burning of sacred traditional medicines.

Ceremonies involving burning medicines will be conducted in the designated areas - outside in the north side gazebo, or indoors in the chapel. Designated areas are the preferred location for the ceremony; however, personnel will facilitate smudging requests in non-designated areas to the extent possible.

PURPOSE:

To enable PRH personnel to respect and support indigenous healing practices of persons while at PRH. Some of these practices involve burning sacred traditional medicines.

Keywords: smudging, sage, cedar, tobacco, sweet grass, traditional medicines, sacred, medicinal branches or boughs, Aboriginal, First Nations

Definitions:

Indigenous Traditional Medicines

Plants used by indigenous peoples for healing of mind, body, emotion, and spirit.

Indigenous Traditional Practitioners

Indigenous peoples who conduct traditional indigenous practices, including ceremonies for spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical wellness.

Smudging

Smudging is a spiritual ceremony using sweet grass, sage, or cedar for spiritual purposes. It involves a smoldering process that creates a relatively small amount of smoke and emits a noticeable aroma.

Traditional Use of Tobacco

The traditional use of tobacco means tobacco used for ceremonies, prayers, and rituals for spiritual significance and meaning.

PROCEDURE:

Staff receiving a request for a smudge will:

- a) Notify the Spiritual Care Coordinator, or Clinical Resource Hospital Charge nurse after hours, who is responsible for the implementation of the following procedures to ensure that no patients, staff, or visitors are unwillingly exposed to smoke and all fire risks are monitored;
- b) Seek assistance from the RN Supervisor Home Care if support is needed to help coordinate and prepare for the ceremony;
- c) Make every effort to accommodate the request.

Outdoor Smudging Ceremonies

1. If the patient is mobile and weather is permitting, the smudge will take place outside.
2. If staff are aware that an outdoor smudging will be taking place, they will notify the Security personnel (after hours).
3. The preferred outdoor location for smudging is the covered shelter on the north side of the hospital.

Indoor Smudging Ceremonies

1. If patient acuity is critical and the patient is not mobile enough to go outdoors or if the weather is not permitting, the ceremony will take place in the hospital Chapel, located in Tower A, 3rd floor (Surgical).
2. In extenuating circumstances smudging may take place in patient room, eg negative pressure rooms.
3. When a request for an indoor smudge ceremony is received, the Spiritual Care Coordinator will ensure that:
 - a) The following departments are notified (preferably 24 hours in advance of the ceremony):
 - i. Security Office of PRH after hours
 - ii. Director of Plant Services/Maintenance
 - iii. will bypass the detectors on the fire alarm system to prevent accidental activation, and adjust the ventilation to minimize migration of smoke to other areas.
 - iv. Manager of the area where the smudge will be taking place.
 - b) Staff in the area regarding the ceremony are notified that a smudging ceremony will be taking place.
 - c) Oxygen is turned off during the ceremony, and any flame is kept clear of combustibles.
 - d) A class “A” fire extinguisher shall be close at hand and personnel are trained in its use.
 - e) Care is given to the disposing of ashes as they pose a fire hazard. Ashes shall be extinguished in a non-combustible container with water or allowed to cool properly in a non-combustible container as to not constitute a fire hazard (not emitting heat or smoke).
 - f) Area staff shall be contacted immediately upon completion of the ceremony. Facilities will return all systems to their original state. This includes the fire alarm, smoke detectors, and ventilation system.

REFERENCES:

Ontario Human Rights Code ISBN 0-7778-6518-1

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1988 c. 31

Ontario Multi-Faith Committee

Ontario Fire Code – Vulnerable Care and Treatment Centre

Providence Care – Indigenous Healing Practices

Adapted from Providence Care, Kingston