

University Health Network Policy & Procedure Manual

Clinical: Smudging & Burning of Sacred Elements for Spiritual Observances & Practices

Policy

University Health Network (UHN) is committed to providing respectful, welcoming, compassionate, culturally and spiritually sensitive and inclusive care to patients and their families. As such, UHN staff and healthcare teams will strive to:

- Provide culturally and spiritually appropriate care to patients and families who request a spiritual observance (i.e. smudging) involving the burning sacred elements (e.g. sweet grass, incense), or lighting of a flame (i.e. candle), or scented products.
- Facilitate requests for religious and spiritual observances that involve the burning and lighting of sacred elements.
- Facilitate the procedure to safely perform religious and spiritual observances for patients and their families in accordance with UHN core values, and UHN policies and practices.

Where possible, arrangements will be made by the clinical team to use a room that has been identified by Safety & Occupational Hygiene, Fire and Facilities as suitable for burning/lighting of sacred elements.

Where possible, arrangements will be made to move the patient to a private room for the duration of the observance/practice to avoid affecting other patients or families.

Safety & Occupational Hygiene will strive to ensure that no patients, staff, or visitors are unwillingly exposed to smoke.

The clinical team or Spiritual Care staff will inform the patient/family when it is safe to perform the ritual.

The patient/family is responsible for providing any required materials for the performance of the ritual.

Note: This policy is limited to inpatients.

Note: Non-scented products are to be used when possible.

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Procedure

1. A patient or patient's family requests a religious observance that involves the lighting and/or burning of a sacred element.
 2. **Clinical area:** Contact Spiritual Care (or administrator-on-site (AOS), after hours).
 - **08:30h to 23:00h:** Page the Spiritual Care on-call at 416-719-1234.
 - **23:00h to 08:30h:** Page the AOS through Locating.
 3. **Spiritual Care or clinical team:** Contact Safety & Occupational Hygiene, Fire, and Facilities Management to determine the suitability of the patient's room (e.g. proper ventilation, deactivate fire and smoke alarm).
 4. **Safety & Occupational Hygiene, Fire, and Facilities:** Provide a time frame for when it is safe to proceed.
- Note:** Wherever possible, advance notice should be given to allow time for safety measures to be determined and implemented.
5. When the religious or spiritual observance is complete, staff will notify Facilities and Fire to reactivate the fire and smoke alarm.

Note: Also refer to the [Algorithm for Patient/Family Requests for Smudging and Burning of Sacred Elements for Spiritual Observances and Practices](#).

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