

Administrative Policies and Procedures

Professional Image Policy

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Department / Section: Administration
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Reviewer: jennyp@u.washington.edu

POLICY PURPOSE:

Policy Purpose

The Professional Image Policy is designed to maintain and perpetuate the reputation of University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC) employees for providing outstanding health care and customer service. By adhering to professional standards of dress, safety, and hygiene throughout the medical center, all UWMC employees will project competence and credibility during their interactions with patients, colleagues, and the general public. At the same time, the policy ensures that all UWMC employees will support the UWMC's vital effort to create and preserve a safe, therapeutic environment that controls infection and facilitates treatment and healing.

Given the wide range of UWMC employee responsibilities and work situations, division managers will adjust this policy's general dress guidelines when necessary, such as to meet heightened safety and/or infection control requirements in a clinical setting, or to fulfill other specialized obligations that might arise for employees representing the UWMC to the broader public. When enforcing this policy's provisions, managers should strive to be vigilant and consistent, thoughtfully basing their decisions on reasonable standards, rather than personal preferences. When an employee requests reasonable accommodation for either religious or disability reasons, supervisors should consult with Human Resources to ensure compliance with state and federal laws. In all cases, however, it is expected that the underlying purpose and principles of the policy will be fulfilled.

POLICY:

Policy Detail

It is the policy of University of Washington Medical Center that:

All UWMC staff (hereinafter including, but not limited to, professional and classified staff, affiliates, hourly and per diem employees, interns, and volunteers) are required to maintain these minimum standards of personal appearance. These standards provide a safe, hygienic, therapeutic, and

professional environment for all members of the UWMC community. By adhering to these standards, hospital staff will be safely and effectively attired for work, and will also portray a positive and professional image to the public that inspires confidence in their ability.

Some duties may require employees to wear uniforms/scrub suits or safety articles, or to adhere to more specific requirements than those set forth in this policy. Supervisors will inform employees when they are subject to more restrictive unit/departmental appearance or dress code standards that supersede this policy's general guidelines.

Closeness and frequency of contact with patients, the public, and fellow employees demand a high degree of personal cleanliness at all times. Such cleanliness is an essential condition of quality patient care and overall professional demeanor.

Staff shall dress in accordance with special safety requirements in their work unit based on the nature of the work and their proximity to possible safety hazards, such as machinery or equipment with moving parts, and hazardous or infectious substances.

The University of Washington Medical Center identification badge is a required part of each employee's attire and must be visible while on duty. Please refer to University of Washington Medical Center Administrative Policies and Procedures (APOP) 125-5.

Employees seeking an exception to this policy based on a protected classification such as race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, should discuss the issue with their supervisors, who will assess the need for same in accordance with applicable state and federal laws, and in consultation with Human Resources. In these circumstances, for example, there will be a review of the existence of alternatives to a given policy, if any, in light of the performance, safety, and/or health demands of a given job responsibility or work area.

Employees seeking an exception to this policy because of a disability or injury, should provide their supervisors with the required medical documentation so that their supervisor (in consultation with Human Resources) may assess the need for reasonable accommodations in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.

Repeated non-compliance with this policy may result in corrective action.

"Patient care" refers to any staff who directly or indirectly provide patient care or work in a clinical setting. More restrictive standards may apply for staff who provide direct patient care services due to patient safety or infection control reasons.

The UWMC management reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of personal appearance.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff must adhere to the dress and safety standards outlined in this policy.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that their staffs comply with this policy and for implementing corrective action(s) in accordance with applicable state and federal laws, University of Washington policies and regulations, as well as the appropriate collective bargaining agreements, should an employee violate this policy.

GUIDELINES

HAIR

Hair must be neatly groomed and clean. Long hair may neither obstruct vision nor interfere in any way with the employee's job performance. A hair restraint, i.e., hair net, may be required in certain settings.

FACIAL HAIR

Facial hair must be neatly groomed, clean, and must not interfere in any way with the employee's job performance. For safety and infection control reasons, employees working in some areas of the hospital, such as operating rooms, may not be permitted to wear beards, or may be required to wear beard guards.

FINGERNAILS

Fingernails should be clean and well maintained to, among other reasons, facilitate good hand washing practices. Fingernail length must be appropriate to the work setting and not interfere with patient care, job performance, or safety. For these same reasons, fingernail length may be restricted in certain work environments. For instance, artificial or long, natural fingernails are not permitted in patient care settings. The definition of artificial fingernails includes, but is not limited to, acrylic nails, all overlays, tips, bondings, extensions, tapes, inlays, nail jewelry, and wraps.

JEWELRY, ACCESSORIES, AND SCENTED-PRODUCTS

Jewelry worn by employees must be of reasonable shape and size, appropriate to the work setting, and may not interfere with patient care, job performance, or safety. Earrings and small nose studs are the only acceptable forms of visible pierced jewelry. Rings must be small enough to allow for the use of gloves, with no risk of tearing the gloves.

Mild scented products, including, but not limited to, perfume, cologne, after-shave, or body lotions, may be worn in moderation, but should be discontinued if patients, visitors, or co-workers express a concern. In clinical settings, the use of any scented products is strongly discouraged, since they may cause respiratory problems for people in the treatment area or may interfere with equipment. Scented products may be restricted altogether in certain areas, such as operating rooms.

TATTOOS

Individuals may be asked to cover tattoos at management's discretion.

ATTIRE

Clothing worn by staff members must be neat, clean, in good condition, and must project an image appropriate to a hospital environment. White lab coats or scrubs may be worn or required by clinical staff and Foodservice Managers. Blue jeans are prohibited except as approved by the department manager in specific work environments. For example, electricians may wear jeans as electrical code lists denim jeans as acceptable minimal protection against arch flash.

Examples of inappropriate dress that is not permitted include, but are not limited to:

Mini-skirts;

Torn, ripped, frayed, patched, un-hemmed clothing, or clothing printed with inappropriate text or images;

Shorts or cut-offs;

Revealing clothing such as halter tops, tank tops, spaghetti straps, low cut or see-through blouses, muscle shirts, or shirts that expose the midriff;

Tight, sheer, or revealing clothing;

Beachwear and sportswear, e.g., jogging suits or sweat pants, unless they are specifically required for a particular position;

Hats, caps, plastic hair bags/shower caps (particularly worn within buildings), unless worn because of a disability or for safety or religious reasons;

Stenciled clothing, including caps, jackets, shirts, etc., that advertise products or display messages or pictures that are inappropriate to the treatment setting, (including but not limited to, clothing with logos for alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, offensive/suggestive content, or clothing displaying nudity or illegal substances), are not allowed. This provision does not apply to reasonable displays of union-related clothing, buttons, stickers, etc., that conform to the standards outlined in this paragraph.

SHOES

All staff must wear shoes that are appropriate for their work area. For example, thongs (flip flops shoes) and slippers are not allowed. Staff providing direct patient care must wear closed toe shoes.

EXCEPTIONS

Nothing in this policy is intended to abridge any employee's rights pursuant to, for example, state or federal laws relating to non-discrimination provisions, or to hinder the advancement of diversity at this institution. Requests for reasonable accommodation for either religious or disability reasons will be assessed in accordance with applicable state and federal laws, as well as University of Washington policies. If questions arise, supervisors shall contact their department's Human Resources Consultant.

Special permission may be granted by the supervisor to make exceptions to this policy for special outings or events, such as picnics, or off-campus activities; however, appearance at these events, nevertheless, must remain appropriate and project a professional image.

ENFORCEMENT

Whereas all supervisors, managers and administrators are authorized to enforce the provisions of this policy, the supervisor of each shift or each department bears the primary responsibility for enforcing this policy promptly, consistently, and in accordance with state and federal laws. Supervisors are directed to seek advice from their department's Human Resources Consultant in applying/interpreting this policy.