



QUINTE HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

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Corporate - Smudging Process

Title: Smudging Process		Policy No:	3.2.22
		Original Issue Date:	March 10 2022
Manual:	Clinical	Approval Date:	March 10 2022
		Policy Lead:	Director Quality and Interprofessional Practice
Department:	Corporate		
Approved By:	Leadership Committee		

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to support Quinte Health Care (QHC) staff and physicians to:

- Provide culturally and spiritually appropriate care to Indigenous patients, their families and partners-in-care who request a smudging at QHC
- Provide culturally and spiritually appropriate care to non-Indigenous patients, families and partners-in-care who request a spiritual observance involving burning sacred elements (e.g sweet grass, incense), or lighting of a flame (e.g. candle)
- Facilitate safe performance of the procedure for all patients and their families/partners-in-care that is in line with QHC values, best practice guidelines and existing policies and procedures
- Ensure a designated smudging/burning area is identified at each site, and to be culturally supportive and accommodating to the practice of smudging/burning as an option in providing care

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to any QHC staff or physicians who receive a request for a smudging/burning process or for those who are facilitating or participating in such a process.

3. DEFINITIONS

Smudging: In Indigenous cultures, this is the practice of purifying the location, patient, healer, helpers, room and objects using smoke obtained by burning sacred medicine plants such as sweet grass, sage, tobacco and/or cedar. The smudging process helps participants centre or ground themselves and is used for healing of the mind, body, and spirit. Smudging also unifies the energies and the people within the circle. Smudging ceremonies are normally brief but could vary in time depending on the person conducting the process and how many people are attending. No one should ever be forced or pressured to smudge. If anyone does not know how to smudge or if they feel reluctant, they can step back and watch or say, “all my relations” to indicate they’d like to pass.

Indigenous: a collective term to encompass the diversity of cultures within First Nations, Inuit and Metis experiences.

4. POLICY

QHC recognizes traditional use of sacred medicine plants in a prayer offering, smudge, or pipe ceremonies as being integral to a spiritual and cultural way of life. QHC will facilitate these requests from patients and family with regard for safety.

A smudging/burning process is permitted to take place on QHC grounds or where the patient is located. As per Smoke-Free Ontario Act (2017) QHC is smoke free. Provincial legislation does outline an exemption for Indigenous Peoples use of tobacco. The Act does not “*prohibit an Indigenous person from smoking tobacco or holding lighted tobacco there, if the activity is carried out for traditional Indigenous cultural or spiritual purposes*”. In addition, the Act states that “At the request of an Indigenous resident, the operator of any of the following shall set aside an indoor area, separate from any area where smoking is otherwise permitted, for the use of tobacco for traditional Indigenous cultural or spiritual purposes”

All QHC hospitals will have at least one designated safe area where smudging/burnings can be performed. Identified areas for a smudging/burning will include access to outside (e.g. window that opens) and consideration of existing ventilation and fire safety in consultation with risk management, security, maintenance, and Occupational Health and Safety. Identified areas are the preferred location however staff and physicians will facilitate requests for a smudging/burning in unidentified areas to the extent possible, with regard to safety.

QHC Identified Smudging/Burning Process Areas		
Hospital	Outdoor Location	Indoor Location
Belleville	North Courtyard (accessed through the learning centre)	Sacred Space (Sills 2 Conference Room)
North Hastings	Courtyard	Negative pressure room (room 32) Sunroom
Picton	Serenity Garden	Room 236
Trenton	Outpatient Patio	Sacred Space (T wing)

A smudging/burning process may be performed in private patient rooms only when the patient is not able to access one of the identified areas (e.g. at end-of-life). A smudging/burning is not permitted in a room in which oxygen is in use however at end-of-life when the oxygen is turned off, the family will be able to use this room for smudging/burning. In instances where a patient is unable to be moved, burning is not permitted and oxygen cannot be turned off, the patient and family will consider other options (e.g. a smokeless alternative or a traditional process including prayers and song without smudging).

5. PROCEDURE

Equipment Required

- Smudging/burning materials and medicine (provided by the patient/family or Spiritual Care)
- Class A fire extinguisher

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff and physicians:

- Will be aware of this policy and follow its associated procedures
- Will support requests for smudging/burning by notifying their manager/Patient Care Lead (PCL) of the request as soon as possible and participate in its organization as appropriate for their role
- If invited and agree to participate, will follow all cultural protocols at the direction of the person leading the process
- Will work in partnership with the patient, their family and spiritual care to select the most appropriate location for the process

Spiritual Care:

- Will receive and facilitate requests for smudging/burnings in partnership with the staff, physician(s), patient and their family
- Will maintain a list of current contacts who can perform these processes
- Will work with the patient/family to arrange for someone to perform the smudging/burning

Patient Care Managers/PCL's:

- Will ensure Spiritual Care is consulted when a smudging/burning request is received
- Ensure all safety protocols are in place prior to the process
- Will inform key stakeholders (security, maintenance, who else) of the location of the process and when it will occur

- Coordinate activities to ensure safety for all involved with particular consideration to those with respiratory sensitivities

Security/Facility Services:

- Will ensure appropriate precautions for fire safety during the ceremony including isolating and temporarily turning off the fire detection in the room that the ceremony is being performed and opening/closing the window

Patient and Family:

- Coordinate the process directly with the Elder/Knowledge Keeper, with staff support as required
- Acknowledge and follow restrictions identified in this policy as they are designed to maintain safety for all

When a request for a smudging/burning is received:

- The staff member or physician will notify Spiritual Care staff and the manager/Patient Care Lead (PCL)
- Work with Spiritual Care/manager/PCL to determine all the details and ensure no patients, staff or visitors are unwillingly exposed to smoke and to ensure that all fire risks are monitored

Procedure for Outdoor Smudging/Burning Ceremonies

1. Manager/PCL/delegate will notify security of the timing the smudging/burning process will take place
2. Manager/PCL/delegate will ensure staff and physician(s) are aware that the patient will be off the unit and arrange for a staff member to accompany the patient if necessary

Procedure for Indoor Smudging/Burning Ceremonies

1. Manager/PCL/delegate will contact spiritual care with the request for use of a designated indoor area
2. Spiritual Care will verify room availability and work with the patient and/or family to arrange for an Elder/Healer to conduct the process, if not already done by the patient/family
3. Manager/PCL/delegate will notify:
 - Security/Emergency Management
 - Facility Services
4. Manager/PCL/delegate will ensure staff and physician(s) are aware that the patient will be off the unit and arrange for a staff member to accompany the patient if necessary

5. Facility Services 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 including opening and closing a window when instructed by the Elder/Healer
6. A class A fire extinguisher shall be close at hand with personnel trained in its use
7. The person leading the process will contain the ashes according to their teachings
8. The manager/PCL/delegate will contact maintenance immediately upon completion of the process
9. Facility Services will return all systems to their original state (includes fire alarm, smoke detectors, windows and ventilation system)
10. Manager/PCL/delegate will arrange to have the designated area cleaned after use

Procedure for Private Patient Room Smudging/Burning Process

Smudging/burning processes may be performed in private patient rooms only when the patient is not able to access one of the identified areas listed above in this policy.

1. When a request for an indoor process is received, the manager/PCL/delegate will ensure that the following departments are notified:
 - Security/Emergency Management
 - Maintenance
2. Facility Services 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 including opening and closing a window when instructed by the Elder/Healer
3. The manager/PCL/delegate will ensure staff in the area where the smudging/burning process will take place are notified and reassigned temporarily if required, until process is complete
4. The manager/PCL/delegate will ensure that oxygen is turned off during the process, and that any flame is kept clear of combustibles
5. A class A fire extinguisher shall be close at hand with personnel trained in its use
6. The person leading the process will contain the ashes according to their teachings
7. The manager/PCL/delegate will contact maintenance immediately upon completion of the process
8. Facility Services will return all systems to their original state (includes fire alarm, smoke detectors, windows and ventilation system)

APPENDICES AND REFERENCES

Appendices: Appendix A – Smudging/Burning Process Algorithm (to be finalized)

References:

Lakeridge Health (2019). Policy: Facilitation of smudge ceremony.

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (2018). Policy: Smudging ceremony.

Smoke-Free Ontario Act (2017), c.26, sched. 3. Retrieved from
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17s26>

The Ottawa Hospital (n.d.) Standard operating procedure: Smudging ceremony (SOP 01716)

Cross References:

2.11.10 Smoke Free Environment

2.11.31 Spiritual and Religious Care