



**SUBJECT: SPIRITUAL CEREMONIES INVOLVING BURNING (SMUDGING)**

**ISSUED BY:** Vice President Clinical Operations

**AUTHORIZED BY:** Senior Management Team

**CATEGORY:** Patient Care and Ethics

**ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY**  
Sault Area Hospital

**NUMBER:** 3.10

**NEW/REVISED:** REVISED

**REPLACES:** June 1, 2016

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## PURPOSE

To help our people, which means, all patients, friends, family, workers, and participants regardless of religion and beliefs to experience the support of their culture in any way possible. Including but not limited to, prayer, smudging, ceremonies, singing, music, and dance.

Smudging includes the burning of sacred medicines and other cultural practises.

## POLICY

In keeping with religious, cultural and/or traditional way of life the spiritual ceremonies involving the burning of sacred medicines may be conducted in an approved designated location (per subsection 19(4) of the [Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 26, Sched. 3](#)). The designated location within Sault Area Hospital is the Spirit Room (C1803) located on the first floor in the hallway outside unit 1C or the outside courtyard connected to the Spirit room.

Smudging and spiritual ceremonies that do not include burning, will be permitted in patient rooms.

## DEFINITIONS:

**The burning of sacred medicines as part of cultural beliefs and the Indigenous way of life.**

**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 (any combination of these may be used). Cleansing often initiates healing sessions, provides comfort and relief in times of stress, facilitates the decision-making process, and is used in offering prayer. Smudging ceremonies are normally brief but could vary in time depending on the person conducting the ceremony and how many people are attending.

## PROCEDURE

1. Requests for ceremonies shall be directed to the care team for the patient. The ceremony shall always occur with the knowledge and support of the care team to ensure patient safety; however, staff is not required to be present during the ceremony. Staff will direct the people requesting ceremonies and help them, if their work schedule permits, to acquire what they need and ensure the ceremony is a positive experience within SAH. Staff will demonstrate respect and compassion for the patient's culture and wishes, as per Sault Area Hospital's Values.

2. Oxygen therapy must not be in use by the patient or other participants due to fire and injury risk. Open flame can not be used around Oxygen therapy due to fire hazards. Actual smudging may be possible as there should be no open flame.
3. Transportation to and from the Spirit Room will be the responsibility of the patient's family or members of the spiritual community. Volunteer assistance may also be arranged if the patient is not under isolation precautions. Staff shall assist as required.
4. Hospital wheelchairs may be used for transportation to and from the ceremony.
5. Unit staff will book the Spirit Room on behalf of the patient through MS Outlook.
6. A point person for the ceremony will notify hospital switchboard (0) before the ceremony to inform them:
  - a. that the ceremony involving the burning (smudging) will commence in the Spirit Room (C1803)
  - b. of an estimation of start time and duration of the ceremony
7. Switchboard will advise maintenance and security of when and where the ceremony will take place, that smoke will be involved, and any other required information.
8. When the ceremony is complete, the point person will notify switchboard who will inform security and direct them to check to ensure all ashes and unburned materials are properly disposed of.

#### **SAFETY PROCEDURE DURING SPIRITUAL CEREMONY**

1. The door to the Spirit Room will remain closed throughout the ceremony. In order to respect others in the building all attempts will be made to confine the smoke/scent to the room. so that it does not extend into other areas of the hospital to respect others in the building. The door will remain closed until all scent dissipates.
2. A sign stating that the room is closed for a private ceremony will be posted on the door of the Spirit Room. The sign must remain on the door until all scent dissipates.
3. Ceremonial container for sacred plants must be non-combustible.
4. The family and/or ceremonial leader will ensure all ashes and unburned material are properly disposed of.

#### **RELATED POLICY**

- Administrative Policy 3.8 – Spiritual Support Services

#### **REFERENCES**

[Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 26, Sched. 3](#)

[Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 - How the Act Affects: Traditional Use of Tobacco by Indigenous Persons](#)