

## **Utah State University Health and Wellness Chaperone Policy**

**Revised: January 5, 2023**

### **Policy:**

All providers in the Student Health and Wellness Center (“SHWC”) will be accompanied by a trained Health Service staff chaperone during all sensitive exams or procedures conducted in the clinic. All providers and chaperones will be trained at hire and annually thereafter.

### **Purpose:**

Utah State University’s SHWC is committed to providing a safe and private space for all patients to receive medical care. In line with this objective, this policy outlines how we aim to provide a chaperone for all sensitive exams or procedures.

For the purposes of this policy the definition of the American College Health Association provided below will be used to define a sensitive exam or procedure. However, SHWC acknowledges that a patient may have a broader personal understanding of what constitutes a sensitive exam. Patients may request a chaperone for any exam, not only for those defined as sensitive in this policy.

### **Definitions:**

#### 1. Sensitive Exam or Procedure

According to ACHA a sensitive exam or procedure includes but is not limited to, an exam, evaluation, palpation, physical therapy for, placement of instruments in, or exposure of: genitalia, rectum, [or] breast.”<sup>1</sup>

#### 2. Chaperone

- a. When serving as a chaperone, a trained Health Services staff member will act as a clinical support person for both the patient and provider during a sensitive exam or procedure.
  - i. If desired by the patient, a personal support person (friend, family member, etc.) may also be present during a sensitive exam, but their presence is not a substitute for the use of a Health Service staff chaperone.

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<sup>1</sup> American College Health Association, *Best Practices for Sensitive Exams*, (October 2019), available at: [https://www.acha.org/documents/resources/guidelines/ACHA\\_Best\\_Practices\\_for\\_Sensitive\\_Exams\\_October2019.pdf](https://www.acha.org/documents/resources/guidelines/ACHA_Best_Practices_for_Sensitive_Exams_October2019.pdf).



- b. The primary role of the chaperone is to monitor the exam. However, they may also be involved in assisting with the exam or procedure as needed.
- c. Chaperones should understand best practices and techniques for exams or procedures. With this knowledge in mind, they are encouraged to provide critical input during or after a sensitive without fear of retaliation. For example, the Chaperone may prompt the service provider to explain the purpose of an exam and why it is conducted in a particular manner. Chaperones may do this using such phrases as “Can you explain what you are doing here?” and “Can you explain why the exam is performed this way?”
- d. A chaperone is authorized to stop a sensitive exam or procedure if they feel the health professional’s behavior is inappropriate or unacceptable.
- e. A chaperone who witnesses inappropriate or unacceptable behavior will immediately report this behavior to the medical director. The medical director will report to the executive director of the Student Health and Wellness center. If the chaperone directly reports to the medical director, the chaperone will report to the executive director of the Student Health and Wellness Center. Consistent with [USU Policy 340](#) chaperones must report any incidents of sexual misconduct they witnessed to the [Title IX Coordinator](#).

### 3. Provider

For purposes of this policy, the term “provider” refers to any physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, nurse, medical assistant, physical therapist or other medical personnel who may conduct a sensitive exam.

#### **Procedure:**

- 1. Mandatory policy: For any sensitive exams or procedures, a chaperone will be present.
  - a. The provider will explain the purpose of the Chaperone policy, while also describing the anticipated purpose for the sensitive exam and what to expect during the exam.



- b. The Provider will ask for the patient's consent to conduct the sensitive exam and/or procedure, and provide an explanation of the exam as part of receiving that consent.
- c. If the patient agrees to proceed, the provider will step out of the exam room to allow the patient to undress and don a gown or drape to ensure maximal privacy and dignity.
- d. The provider will return with the chaperone, introduce them to the patient, and begin the exam when the patient expresses consent to proceed.
- e. The chaperone will remain in view of the point of physical contact between the provider and patient at all times during the exam or procedure.
- f. The chaperone will professionally and discretely notify the provider if:
  - i. They feel the patient needs more verbal cues during the exam;
  - ii. They need a sight line adjustment to see the point of physical contact;
  - iii. They recommend a pause during the exam or procedure if patient discomfort is noted; and/or
  - iv. A time-out is necessary to address significant patient discomfort or chaperone discomfort with actions observed during the exam.
- g. The provider will respond and adjust appropriately to the chaperone's cues during the sensitive exam or procedure.
- h. The patient consent (or decline) for having a chaperone and the name and title of the chaperone will be documented by the provider on the chart note in the electronic health record.
- i. If a patient requires emergency medical attention, care will be delivered and the chaperone may not be present for the entire exam or procedure.

2. Given that a chaperone is recommended for all sensitive exams and procedures, if a patient declines a chaperone, the provider will refer the patient elsewhere for that exam.

### Chaperone and Provider Training

1. Chaperones will be trained at hire or when someone has been designated as a chaperone. For providers that have been trained, review of the policy and chaperone training will be renewed each year.
2. Chaperone training will include education on the following:
  - a. How to ensure patient comfort during a sensitive exam or procedure;
  - b. How to ensure dignity with privacy related to dressing/undressing and use of a gown or drape;
  - c. How to position oneself as a chaperone to ensure visualization of the point of contact during a sensitive exam or procedure;
  - d. How to intervene or stop an exam if they are concerned about patient distress or inappropriate steps occurring during the exam or procedure;
  - e. How to report concerns or non-compliance with the Chaperone Policy by providers; and
  - f. When a violation of this Chaperone Policy may constitute sexual misconduct under [USU Policy 339](#) and must be reported to the [Title IX Coordinator](#).
3. Providers will be trained on the Chaperone Policy and their assent to abide by the Chaperone Policy at hire and annually thereafter.
4. Provider training will include education on the following:
  - a. How to communicate with the patient about why a sensitive exam is indicated;
  - b. How to communicate before and during sensitive exams what to expect;
  - c. How to document if a patient declines any part of the exam;
  - d. How to document the presence of a chaperone during a sensitive exam;
  - e. What type of communication to expect should the chaperone identify a need to pause the exam due to obscured view or patient discomfort; and
  - f. How to report non-compliance and complaints regarding chaperones.

### **Patient Education**

1. Patients will be provided with the Chaperone Policy Summary at the time of check-in and electronic link to full Chaperone Policy.

### **Reporting of non-compliance and complaints**

1. A provider noting non-compliance of the policy or complaints about the chaperone will notify the medical director. The medical director will notify the executive director of SHWC.
2. Patients may report non-compliance with Chaperone Policy to the executive director of the SHWC, Dr. Scott DeBerard at [scott.deberard@usu.edu; 435-797-1462].

### **Risk management related to investigation of complaints**

Complaints regarding non-compliance with this Chaperone Policy will be processed and investigated by SHWC supervisors and/or HR as appropriate. However, complaints of sexual misconduct under USU Policy 339 will be investigated by the USU's Title IX Coordinator.

### **References:**

ACHA Guidelines Best Practices for Sensitive Exams, October 2019

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[https://www.acha.org/documents/resources/guidelines/ACHA\\_Best\\_Practices\\_for\\_Sensitive\\_Exams\\_October2019.pdf](https://www.acha.org/documents/resources/guidelines/ACHA_Best_Practices_for_Sensitive_Exams_October2019.pdf)