

Policy



Policy Title:	Smudging Ceremony	
Applies To:	All IWK Health Employees, Physicians and Learners, Volunteers and Researchers	
Location Applicability:	IWK Health	
Approved:	Effective:	Next Review:
June 13, 2023	June 13, 2023	June 13, 2027
Related Procedure:	#1760 Supporting Smudging Requests	
Sponsor:	Director, Healthy Populations & Provincial Initiatives	
Approval Authority:	IWK Policy and Practice Committee	
Number: 1755	Manual:	Clinical

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PURPOSE

Patients and families of Indigenous descent and those who have incorporated smudging practices within their lives, may request to smudge while receiving care at IWK Health. Smudging is a spiritual ceremony practiced for generations within many Indigenous cultures. It is used for prayer, cleansing and healing of the mind, body, emotions, and spirit. It involves the burning of one or more sacred medicines, including but not limited to sweet grass, sage, cedar, and tobacco. Liquid and dry-rub smudge also referred to as smokeless smudge, may be used as an alternative to burning medicines.

Creating a culturally safe environment for Indigenous people to exercise their spirituality aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Article 12:1), and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Supporting smudging is a key step towards redressing the legacy of Residential Schools and addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, specifically call number 22 which calls for; “those who can effect change within the Canadian Health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients” ([Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, 2015](#)).

POLICY STATEMENTS

- 1.0 IWK Health employees **must** facilitate **all** smudging requests.
 - 1.1 IWK (main campus), contact Spiritual Care upon receipt of a Smudging request (902 470-7722). Protection Services must be informed when Smudging Ceremonies are to take place indoors and outdoors.
 - 1.2 IWK Off-site locations, contact your areas supervisor or manager upon receipt of a Smudging request.

- 2.0 Safety is priority
 - 2.1 Smudging **must not** take place in *positive pressure* rooms or where *oxygen* is being administered (Smoke-less Smudging options are available and **must** be offered).
 - 2.2 Ensure a fire extinguisher is within appropriate proximity when a Smudging Ceremony is in progress.
 - 2.3 Keep door closed for the duration of the Smudging Ceremony and for 30 minutes afterwards.

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- 3.0 Consult with the Indigenous Health Consultant, Spiritual Care or your site-specific supervisor or manager with any uncertainties or concerns. (ex. Smudging requests with a patient/family requiring non-medical supervision (Protection Service involvement), use of medical gases etc.).
- 4.0 Privacy of the patient and family participating in a Smudging Ceremony must be respected.
- 5.0 When Protection Services is required for safety purposes, ensure an explanation is provided to the patient/family from a trauma informed and culturally responsive lens.
- 6.0 All IWK Health employees choosing to participate in the Smudging Ceremony, will respect and follow ceremonial protocols as established by the patient/family or the person facilitating the ceremony.
- 7.0 Smoke from the Smudge has a scent. Strive to inform patients, families, and staff in or near the Smudging area.
- 8.0 Once the Smudging Ceremony is complete, ashes from the Smudge must be left to cool off before returning the ashes to the Earth. **Do not put ashes in the garbage for fire/safety and cultural purposes.**
 - 8.1 If ashes cannot safely be returned to the Earth, they must be emptied into a metal container that will be provided by Spiritual Care or your area supervisor/manager.
- 9.0 Documentation of the smudging request and ceremony must be made in the patient's chart ([Minimum Documentation Standards #100.3](#)).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

IWK Health strives to deliver patient and family centred care, and trauma informed services that are culturally responsive in a culturally and psychologically safe environment. These would include actions that reflect and recognize the impact of colonialism, respect and value patient and families' cultural identity, spirituality, and traditional practices.

PROCEDURE

For steps required to support smudging requests, refer to Procedure #1760

REFERENCES

Legislatives/Acts

Canadian Rights and Freedoms. (1982). Constitution Act, Retrieved from <http://www.etc.ca/pages/law/charter/charter.text.html>

References

- Government of Canada. 2017. Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/rights-indigenous-peoples.html>
- Indigenous Inclusion Directorate. 2019. Smudging protocol and guidelines for school divisions. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aed/publications/pdf/smudging_guidelines.pdf
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. 2015. Retrieved from http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. 2008. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf
- First Nations Health Authority. 2022. Cultural Safety and Humility. <https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-and-the-first-nations-health-authority/cultural-safety-and-humility>
- World Health Organization. 2017. Framework on integrated, people-centred health services. https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA69/A69_39-en.pdf?ua=1&ua=1

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Policies

- [IWK Policy 1003.0 Minimum Documentation Standards for Health Care Providers](#)
- [IWK Policy 139 Guidelines for Acknowledgement of Mi'kma'ki Territory](#)
- [IWK Protocol 142 Working with Indigenous Elders](#)
- [IWK Procedure 1755 Supporting Smudging Requests](#)

Brochures

- [Equity and Belonging Len tool Kit](#)
- [IWK Position Statement on Diversity, Inclusion and Culturally Competent Care](#)
- [Indigenous Health Brochure](#)
- [Provincial Diversity and Inclusion Framework](#)

Appendices

- Appendix A – Definitions

Appendix A – Definitions

Cultural Safety – Cultural safety is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care (First Nations Health Authority, 2022). The only person who can determine if services were culturally safe is the person receiving them. The provider and the system cannot claim to be culturally safe.

Family - There are many different types of families that surround us, including our immediate and extended families. For Indigenous Peoples, family is often seen much broader than many Western perspectives. For Indigenous Peoples, immediate and extended families are often interchangeable, so Western descriptions and definitions don't always apply. Families for Indigenous Peoples may also include who we care for, support systems, and traditional systems in addition to (or instead of) simply blood lines. It is important to recognize the diversity that exists across Mi'kma'ki, and many different family systems exist (e.g., matrilineal) <https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-for-first-nations/first-nations-perspective-on-health-and-wellness>

Indigenous Peoples – is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants (Government of Canada, 2017). The Canadian Constitution recognizes three distinct groups of Indigenous people: First Nations, Metis, and Inuit. In keeping with international agreements, Indigenous Peoples is being used instead of Aboriginal Peoples.

People Centred Care (formerly Patient and Family Centred Care) - is an approach to care that consciously adopts individuals', carers', families', and communities' perspectives as participants in, and beneficiaries of, trusted health systems that are organized around the comprehensive needs of people (World Health Organization 2017). People-Centred Care (PCC) also requires that patients have the education and support they need to make decisions and participate in their own care and that carers can attain maximal function within a supportive working environment. PCC is broader than patient and person-centered care, encompassing not only clinical encounters, but also including attention to the health of people in their communities and their crucial role in shaping health policy and health services.

Smudging - is a spiritual ceremony common in many Indigenous communities and has been passed on from generation to generation. This traditional and holistic ceremony involves burning sacred medicines which produces scent and a small amount of smoke. Smudging is used for prayers, cleansing and healing of the mind, body, emotions, and spirit.

Trauma-Informed Care - is a universal, systematic approach that is grounded in an understanding of, and responsiveness to, the impact of trauma. It emphasizes the prevalence, effects, and impact of trauma for those receiving our services and also for those who deliver services across IWK Health. Trauma Informed Care offers these principles to guide our practice: Safety (physical, emotional, and cultural), Trustworthiness, Choice, Collaboration and Empowerment (Strengths based skill building).

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IWK/NSH Policy Documents Being Replaced

New Policy

Version History

(To Be Completed by the Policy Office)

Major Revisions (e.g. Standard 4 year review)	Minor Revisions (e.g. spelling correction, wording changes, etc.)