

# Policy



<b>Policy Title:</b>	Smudging Ceremony	
<b>Applies To:</b>	All IWK Health Care Team Members	
<b>Location Applicability:</b>	All IWK Health	
<b>Approved:</b>	<b>Effective:</b>	<b>Next Review:</b>
June 13, 2023	June 13,2023	June 13,2027
<b>Related Procedure:</b>	<a href="#">1760 Supporting Smudging Requests</a>	
<b>Sponsor/s:</b>	Director of Interprofessional Practice and Learning Executive Lead, Transformation	
<b>Approval Authority:</b>	IWK Policy and Practice Committee	
<b>Number:</b> 1755	<b>Manual:</b>	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 peoples 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. IWK Health Care Team Members **must** facilitate **all** smudging requests.
  - 1.1. IWK (main campus) patient/family care team must follow the procedural steps [IWK Health Policy 1760 Supporting Smudging Requests](#) upon receipt of a smudging request.
  - 1.2. Care team must make every effort to inform Protection Services immediately upon receipt of a Smudging request when Smudging Ceremonies are to take place indoors and outdoors.
  - 1.3. Protection Services must make every effort to contact the Shift Engineers immediately upon receipt of a Smudging request.
  - 1.4. Shift Engineers must make every effort to prioritize and respond to Smudging requests immediately following communication with Protection Services.
  - 1.5. IWK Off-site location team members must contact area Supervisor or Manager upon receipt of a Smudging request.

2. Safety **must** be a priority, in that, care team members **must**:
  - 2.1. Ensure Smudging **does not** take place in *positive pressure* rooms or where *oxygen* is actively being administered (Smoke-less Smudging options are available and **must** be offered).
  - 2.2. Assess the area for other potential accelerants (e.g., alcohol rub and other flammables).
  - 2.3. Identify where the nearest fire extinguisher is located prior to the facilitation of a Smudging request.
  - 2.4. Keep door closed for the duration of the Smudging Ceremony and for 30 minutes afterwards.
3. Any uncertainties or concerns **must** be directed to the Indigenous Health Consultant, or with your site-specific Supervisor or Manager (e.g., Smudging requests with a patient/family requiring non-medical supervision (Protection Service involvement)).
4. Privacy of the patient and family participating in a Smudging Ceremony **must** be respected.
5. When Protection Services is required for safety purposes, an explanation **must** be provided to the patient/family from a trauma informed and culturally responsive lens.
6. All IWK Health care team members choosing to participate in a Smudging Ceremony, **must** respect and follow ceremonial protocols as established by the patient/family or facilitator of the ceremony.
  - 6.1. Out of courtesy, care team members may inform patients, families, and staff who are in or near the Smudging area that the Smudge has a scent in alignment with the [Smoke-Free Places Act, 2020](#).
7. Once the Smudging Ceremony is complete, the ashes from the Smudge **must** be left to cool off before putting the ashes into a metal container or returning the ashes to the Earth.
  - 7.1. Ashes **must not** be placed in the garbage due to cultural and fire/safety purposes.
  - 7.2. Ashes **must** be emptied into the metal container and returned to the Earth when possible (e.g., simply gently place the ashes outdoors under a tree or in the soil).
  - 7.3. If the ashes cannot immediately be safely returned to the Earth, they **must** be emptied into the metal container that is provided within the Smudging kit.

8. The health care team **must** document the Smudging request and ceremony in the patient's permanent health record ([Minimum Documentation Standards #100.3](#)).

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

IWK Health strives to deliver people centred care, and trauma informed services that are culturally responsive in a 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 healing practices.

## PROCEDURE

For steps required to support Smudging requests, refer to [IWK Health Policy 1760 Supporting Smudging Requests](#).

## REFERENCES

### Legislatives/Acts

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

Smoke-Free Places Act. (2020). Province of Nova Scotia, Retrieved from <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/smoke-free%20places.pdf>

### References

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>

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](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](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](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

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](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

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**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.

**IWK Health care team** - IWK Health employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, residents, volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of IWK (including contracted service providers as necessary).

**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).

### Version History

(To Be Completed by the Policy Office)

<b>Major Revisions (e.g. Standard 4 year review)</b>	<b>Minor Revisions (e.g. spelling correction, wording changes, etc.)</b>
	April 23, 2024: Language changes, included a new definition.