

Health Service Chaperone Policy

Policy:

It is the policy of the Lewis & Clark Health Service to utilize a Health Service staff trained chaperone during all sensitive exams or procedures conducted in the clinic.

Purpose:

The Lewis & Clark College Health Service is committed to providing a safe and private space for all students to receive medical care. In line with this objective, this policy will outline how we aim to provide a chaperone for all sensitive exams or procedures. According to the American College Health Association (ACHA), a sensitive exam or procedure includes examination of genitalia, rectum, or breast. We acknowledge that a patient may have a broader personal definition of sensitive exams. Students are encouraged to request a chaperone for any exam, however, for the purposes of this policy the ACHA definition will be used to define a sensitive exam or procedure.

Definitions:

1. Sensitive Exam or Procedure
 - a. Any exam or procedure that involves exposure of the genitalia, rectum, or breast
 - b. Based on personal or cultural experiences, this definition may be expanded to include an exam or procedure involving partial exposure or palpation of body parts near sensitive areas, or areas that would customarily be covered by clothing, in which case a chaperone may be requested.
2. Chaperone
 - c. A trained Health Services staff member who acts 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
 - d. 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.

- e. Chaperones should have an understanding of best practices and technique for the planned exam or procedure. With this knowledge in mind, they are encouraged to provide critical input during or after an encounter without fear of retaliation.
 - i) Example: “Can you clarify what you are doing there?”
- f. A chaperone has the right to stop a sensitive exam or procedure if they feel the health professional’s behavior is inappropriate or unacceptable.
- g. A chaperone who witnesses inappropriate or unacceptable behavior will immediately report this behavior. If the chaperone directly reports to the provider, the chaperone will have others within the organization to whom they can report concerns.

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. Once 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.
 - c. The provider will return with the chaperone, introduce them to the patient, and begin the exam when the patient expresses consent to proceed.
 - d. 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.
 - e. 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
 - iv. A time out is necessary to address significant patient discomfort or chaperone discomfort with actions observed during the exam
 - f. The provider will respond and adjust appropriately to the chaperone cues during the sensitive exam or procedure.
 - g. The name and title of the chaperone will be documented by the provider on the chart note in the electronic health record.
 - h. If a patient requires emergency medical attention, care will be delivered and a chaperone may not be present for the entire exam or procedure.

2. Given that a chaperone is required for all sensitive exams and procedures, if a patient declines a chaperone, the patient will be directed off campus for further evaluation.

Chaperone and Provider Training

1. Chaperones will be trained at hire or when someone has been designated as a chaperone. Key competencies will be reviewed on an annual basis.
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.
3. Providers will be trained on the clinic policy and utilization of chaperones at hire.
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.
 - f. How to report non-compliance and complaints for chaperones.

Patient Education

1. The clinic will provide information to patients in written form related to the chaperone policy which is posted on the website and directed to read before the appointment. This material will include highlights related to the following:
 - a. What is considered a sensitive exam or procedure
 - b. The role of a chaperone
 - c. How the patient can request a chaperone during a near sensitive exam
 - d. A reminder that the patient is empowered to ask for clarity on concerns related to the exam, express discomfort, and terminate the exam at any point

Reporting of non-compliance and complaints

1. Trained chaperones observing non-compliance of the policy by providers or documenting complaints about the patient encounter should report the incidents to their supervisor or if the supervisor is involved to the providers supervisor.
2. A provider noting non-compliance of the policy or complaints about the chaperone will notify the chaperones supervisor.
3. Patients may report non-compliance and complaints about the sensitive exam to the Title IX office at https://www.lclark.edu/about/title_ix_compliance/. This reporting can be done anonymously.

Risk management related to investigation of complaints

1. Supervisors and/or HR will investigate chaperone or provider reporting of complaints or non-compliance.
2. The Title IX office will investigate complaints by students.

References:

ACHA Guidelines Best Practices for Sensitive Exams, October 2019

[-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)