

Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Policy and Procedure		
Escort – Unsecure and Off-Campus Locations		
Effective: July 2014	Revised: October 2024	Due for Review: October 2026

POLICY

The Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VPCH) has a duty to protect the rights and safety of persons who are hospitalized. These rights include, but are not limited to, access to the least restrictive modes of escort to off-campus providers or services to the extent that health or safety considerations do not make it necessary to place limitations on the aforementioned. This policy also applies to VPCH personnel providing escort to discharge locations.

DEFINITIONS

Escort: For the purposes of this policy, *escort* shall refer to the accompaniment and direct supervision of hospitalized persons when accessing locations that are unsecure and/or off the hospital campus.

Secure: For the purposes of this policy, *secure* shall refer to off unit areas of the hospital in which an individual's mobility is limited by the badge/key access and/or exit points.

PROCEDURE

The Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health (Commissioner, DMH) delegates authority to authorize modes of transportation and escort to VPCH providers. VPCH has established the following standard modes of transportation and escort to help guide clinical decision making in this regard. A written provider's order may further specify transportation and escort requirements.

1. State of Vermont vehicle transport with a minimum of two VPCH escort personnel trained in (2) Professional Assault Crisis Training ProACT . This is considered the least restrictive mode of transportation.
2. Emergency Medical Personnel/Ambulance with the number of trained escort personnel as deemed necessary by the ordering provider and/or request for law enforcement personnel escort.
3. Law Enforcement transport and escort (note that when law enforcement personnel provide transportation/escort, custody of the hospitalized person is transferred from VPCH personnel to law enforcement personnel). This is considered the most restrictive mode of transportation.

The on-duty Nurse Supervisor shall inform and coordinate with the Admissions team any time a hospitalized person is being provided escort outside of secure hospital areas and/or off the hospital campus.


A provider shall complete and document a face-to-face assessment, collaborate with members of the individual's treatment team, and enter a written order indicating the determined mode of transport and escort in the medical record prior to departure. If the ordering provider determines

transportation/escort by law enforcement personnel is needed, the rationale for such determination shall be documented in the medical record.

Prior to a transfer of authority between hospital staff and law enforcement, hospital procedures guiding emergency involuntary procedures apply. Following the transfer from hospital staff, law enforcement personnel have the authority to make professional decisions regarding the use of restraints. The date and time transfers of authority occur should be documented in the medical record.

Transportation to and from criminal court shall be authorized, scheduled, and facilitated by employees of the court, and this may happen in collaboration with the VPCH Admissions Department.

Executive Medical Officer approval, or approval from their designee, is required for off-site transportation requests unrelated to emergent medical needs OR required legal proceedings. The Executive Medical Officer, or their designee, shall also be notified of any emergent transfers that occur.

Approved by	Signature	Date
Emily Hawes, Commissioner, Vermont Department of Mental Health	 C50275615A62462...	10/15/2024

APPENDIX A

Emergency Medical Transfer Guidance:

- Any personnel assessing an emergent medical condition can and should seek assistance from emergency personnel by calling 911.
- EMT/ambulance transportation should be the standard mode of transportation for urgent and emergent medical services. Law enforcement personnel can be requested as health and safety considerations warrant but shall NOT delay emergent transfer. If a provider determines emergent medical transportation should not be utilized, the reasons for such determination shall be documented in the medical record.
- The on-duty supervisor shall assign VPCH escort personnel to accompany the hospitalized person. Consultation shall occur with Emergency Medical Personnel regarding whether VPCH escort personnel should accompany the hospitalized individual in the ambulance OR if VPCH escort personnel should meet them at the receiving facility.
- The on-duty VPCH provider shall complete a provider-to-provider handoff with the Emergency Department attending about the transfer. This handoff can be delegated to the medical consultant however the VPCH provider retains accountability for initial handoff as well as ongoing communication with the Emergency Department.
- VPCH has established packets of emergency paperwork that may be utilized for emergent or urgent medical transfers. Paperwork applicable to the circumstance should be sent with the hospitalized person or to the receiving facility as circumstances warrant.
- The receiving facility assumes ALL care and observation responsibilities. Assigned VPCH escort personnel shall collaborate with providers at the receiving facility to maintain observation of and support the hospitalized person until determination of ongoing care and treatment needs is made.
- If the hospitalized person is referred back to VPCH, the complete medical record should be reviewed by the on-duty VPCH provider and the on-duty Nursing Supervisor. The VPCH accepting provider shall also pursue a provider-to-provider handoff from the discharging facility provider. The individual needs to be medically cleared and accepted to return to VPCH by a VPCH provider BEFORE escort back to VPCH occurs. The accepting provider shall work with the on-duty Nurse Supervisor to communicate with assigned escort personnel and coordinate return transportation.
- If the person hospitalized is admitted to a facility other than VPCH, the hospitalized person shall be discharged from VPCH by following standard discharge procedure. VPCH escort personnel can return to VPCH and the admitting facility can work directly with the DMH Administrator on active status to facilitate additional supports they may deem necessary.

APPENDIX B

Standard Safety Guidance for VPCH Escort Personnel:

- At least two (2) Professional Assault Crisis Training ProACT trained personnel should be assigned to off-campus escorts when VPCH personnel are also providing the transportation; one driver and at least one additional escort unless otherwise specified by written provider order. Careful consideration shall be given to orders indicating fewer than two (2) transporters.
- A cellphone is provided to the assigned escort personnel for the duration of the escort.
- The person hospitalized shall be seated in the rear passenger-side seat of the transport vehicle with an escort personnel seated next to them and behind the driver.
- VPCH escort personnel shall use VPCH Fleet Vehicles in accordance with applicable State Policy (found here: <https://bgs.vermont.gov/gbs/fleet/operations>) to transport hospitalized persons;. Personal vehicles are NOT permitted for the transportation of hospitalized persons.
- Use of the Fleet Vehicles shall be coordinated with the VPCH Staffing Office. Escorting personnel shall each show a current, valid driver's license to a Staffing Coordinator. This process shall be documented on the Transport Acknowledgement form.
- Smoking and use of tobacco products is prohibited in VPCH vehicles.
- The assigned driver is responsible for conducting a safety survey before and after vehicle use and bringing any necessary documents or items (face sheet, consult documentation, cellphone, etc.).
- Stops other than the identified destination or necessary stops to refuel shall be generally avoided. If needed, a to-go meal for the hospitalized person shall be arranged.
- If an unplanned stop is required, escort personnel are entrusted to maintain care and surveillance of persons hospitalized in a manner that aims to maintain the safety of all involved. Consultation with on-duty Nurse Supervisor is encouraged for such circumstances.

If a hospitalized person attempts to elope, VPCH escort personnel shall act to prevent the elopement if this can be done safely in accordance with the VPCH Elopement Policy. If elopement or other emergency circumstances do occur during an off-campus transport, the VPCH escort personnel shall notify emergency responders (911) to report the condition. Escort personnel shall then contact the VPCH Nursing Supervisor to notify the hospital of the emergency.

APPENDIX C
Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital
Transport Acknowledgement Form

Instructions: Review information below, sign, date, and return to the Staffing Office.

I have reviewed the following policies:

- Escort – Unsecure and Off Campus Locations Policy and Procedure
- Elopement Policy and Procedure

I understand and acknowledge the following key points regarding the transportation and escort of persons hospitalized:

1. The Staff Transport Information form is to be completed for each hospitalized person I transport.
2. I am not authorized to utilize physical restraint as an intervention for individuals I am transporting.
3. If a situation escalates, I will utilize ProACT evasion and crisis communication techniques and/or emergency services as needed.

Each time you sign out a state vehicle for the purposes of transporting persons hospitalized, you must show a current, valid driver’s license to a Scheduling Coordinator.

- I have signed a phone out from Admissions.
- I have verified with the Nurse that the individual I am transporting has been assessed by a physician.

Signature

Print Name

Date

I have reviewed the staff member’s current driver’s license:

Signature of Scheduling Coordinator

Print Name

Date

Form Routing Instructions:
 Document shall be archived for three years from the date of signature.
 Documents will be periodically scanned and archived digitally in secure folder.
 Paper documents will be shredded after scanning.
 Digital files may be deleted three years after signature.

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