

# Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Procedure

## Escorting Patients

Revised: X

Date: 04/07/14

### Individual and Group Escort

- A. Staff members are assigned to escort patients either in supervised groups or individually.
- B. Staff may not use any mechanical restraints for the routine escort of patients.
- C. Consistent with the assigned level of autonomy, the Nursing Supervisor will approve an individual patient or a group of patients that are identified to leave the unit with the assigned staff member(s). The Nursing Supervisor will ensure that the staff-to-patient ratio is no less than two staff members for every group of up to five patients. Exceptions will be per written order of the attending physician.
- D. The Nursing Supervisor or designee shall evaluate, using available clinical information, staff report, or direct observation the mental status of each patient, before the patient leaves the unit. The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure that the patient's mental status is consistent with the patient's current treatment plan and physician's order related to level of autonomy.
- E. The Nursing Supervisor and an on-call physician may exercise clinical discretion and judgment to further reduce level of autonomy if either discipline determines that clinical presentation supports a reduction in a patient's level of autonomy. The Nursing Supervisor or on-call physician must document any reduction in level of autonomy in the medical record and bring the change in level of autonomy to the attention of the patient's treatment team. The attending physician in consultation with the treatment team has authority to determine whether a change in level of autonomy is appropriate. Refer to the *Levels of Autonomy and Supervision Policy and Procedure* for guidance
- F. Staff escorting an individual patient off the unit will remain generally within arm's length of the patient at all times while the patient is off the unit. Staff escorting a group of patients off the unit will keep all patients in the group within eye sight and patients shall generally be within 25 feet of a staff person.
- G. In the event that a patient needs to use a bathroom, one of the staff members shall maintain voice contact with the patient while the patient is in the bathroom. When escorting in a group, the other staff member will continue to observe the rest of the group.
- H. A staff member will immediately contact the switchboard if a patient leaves the group and does not respond to encouragement to return to the group. A staff member will follow the patient who has left the group only if there is another staff member present who can stay with the group. Refer to *Late Return/Elopement Policy and Procedure* for patient elopement.

Approved by	Signature	Date
Frank Reed, Commissioner of DMH		11/29/16