

Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Procedure

Elopement

Revised: X

Date: 11/5/2015

Definitions:

“Elopement” means that a patient has left the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital, hospital grounds (VPCH or “Hospital”) or the company of staff without authorization.

I. Attempted Elopement

If staff become aware that a patient has eloped or attempted to elope, staff shall immediately notify the Nursing Supervisor or designee.

If a patient attempts to elope from VPCH, treatment staff shall act to prevent the elopement if this can be done safely. If elopement prevention cannot be done safely, staff shall follow the procedures as described in *Section II, Elopement from VPCH*, below.

If the patient is found outside the Hospital or Hospital grounds, the staff member(s) shall encourage the patient to return. If the patient fails to return to the hospital, the staff shall contact the Admissions Office to inform them of the patient’s current location. If it can be done safely, staff may follow a patient for the sole purpose of reporting the patient’s location.

II. Elopement from VPCH

- A. When a patient appears to be missing, staff must immediately notify the Nursing Supervisor or designee, and the Nursing Supervisor or designee shall immediately initiate a search for the patient.
- B. The Nursing Supervisor or designee shall assign staff to look for the missing patient within the Hospital and on the Hospital grounds (parking lot and Hospital environs).
- C. If staff is unable to locate a patient promptly, the Nursing Supervisor or designee shall immediately notify the patient’s physician or, if applicable, the on-call physician.
- D. When a patient elopes or is believed by staff to have eloped, the Nursing Supervisor or designee shall immediately notify the Admissions Office and provide that office with all pertinent information, including but not limited to, the patient’s likely direction, the clothing the patient was wearing, and time of elopement, if known.

III. Elopement Notifications

- A. The Admissions Specialist shall begin documenting the elopement on the Patient Elopement Form immediately upon learning from the Nursing Supervisor or designee or transport staff that a patient is believed to have eloped
 - 1. If other hospital staff have not already called 911, call 911 to notify of the patient elopement.
 - 2. The Admissions Specialist shall follow any directions given by the 911 operator.
 - 3. Notify the following individuals of the elopement:
 - a. VPCH Chief Executive Officer or designee;
 - b. The Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health, or designee;
 - c. The VPCH Medical Director or designee,
 - d. The Director of Nursing or designee.
- B. All Hospital staff shall direct calls about patient elopements to the Admissions Office.
- C. If the eloped patient has a guardian, the attending physician or designee shall inform the guardian about the elopement.

IV. Elopement From Staff Transport

- A. If staff become aware that a patient has eloped from a staff transport, staff shall immediately call 911 and follow the directions provided by the 911 operator.
- B. After providing the 911 operator with the pertinent information requested by the 911 operator, the staff person shall call Admissions.
- C. Staff must supervise patients, consistent with staff safety and *Escorting Patients Policy and Procedure* and the *Transporting Patients Policy and Procedure*.
- D. If it can be done safely, staff may follow a patient for the sole purpose of reporting the patient's location.

V. Notification of Elopement To Officials

The Director of Quality, or designee, shall initiate a review of any elopement not later than on the following business day of the day the patient eloped. The Director or designee shall send a copy of the Department of Mental Health Critical Incident Reporting Form, to:

Vermont Department of Mental Health
280 State Drive NOB 2 North
Waterbury, Vermont 05671-2010

Patient Safety and Surveillance Improvement System
Vermont Program for Quality in Healthcare
132 Main Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Survey and Certification
Division of Licensing and Protection
1-888-700-5330

VI. Documentation

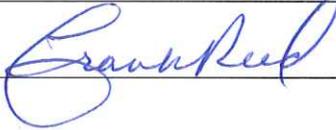
- A. The Nursing Supervisor or designee shall ensure that an event report is completed pursuant to the VPCH Event Reporting Procedure.
- B. The Nursing Supervisor or designee shall ensure that a Progress Note for a High Risk Event with a complete description of the event is written and placed in the eloped patient's medical record.
- C. Admissions shall provide the original completed Patient Elopement Form to VPCH Quality.

VII. Return from Elopement

When a patient returns from an elopement or the suspected elopement is otherwise resolved:

- A. The attending physician or, if applicable, the on-call physician, shall assess the patient and enter a progress note in the patient's medical record. Staff shall search the patient pursuant to the *Restricted Items and Search Policy and Procedure*.

- B. The Admissions Specialist shall inform the people who were notified of the elopement that the patient has been returned to VPCH or that the elopement has been otherwise resolved.
- C. After the return of the patient, the Admissions Specialist shall complete Return from Elopement Form and provide the original completed form to VPCH Quality.

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