



Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of the Medical Center

MEDICAL CENTER POLICY NO. 0206

- A. SUBJECT: Eloped Adult Patients
(formerly Missing/Eloped Patients)
- B. EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2013 (R)
- C. POLICY:

The University of Virginia Medical Center recognizes that some patients may leave the Medical Center without giving proper notice and/or against medical advice ([See Medical Center Policy No. 0295 “Patients Leaving Inpatient Care Units”](#)).

Because any report of a missing infant or child is treated as a possible abduction, [Medical Center Policy No. 0141 “Infant/Child Abduction”](#) shall be implemented if a missing patient is under the age of 18.

When an adult patient is suspected to have eloped, as defined below, Medical Center personnel shall investigate and document the incident according to the procedures set forth below.

D. DEFINITIONS:

The terms eloped (“Eloped”) or eloped patient (“Eloped Patient”) shall apply to an adult patient who leaves the premises of the Medical Center or his/her assigned unit without the knowledge or permission of Medical Center personnel under the following circumstances:

- The patient is under legal restriction such as emergency custody order (ECO), temporary detaining order (TDO), or involuntary commitment order;
- The patient has a documented and/or clinically assessed competency/capacity or mental status issue related to physiologic, psychological, or psychiatric etiology;
- The patient is on Suicide Precautions;
- The patient is confined to a locked unit

E. PROCEDURE:

1. When any adult patient is believed to have Eloped, patient care staff shall promptly search the immediate area. If there is no information about the probable whereabouts of the Eloped Patient, patient care staff shall notify the Shift Manager/Charge Nurse.

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2. The Shift Manager/Charge Nurse shall immediately notify Medical Center Security Dispatch (phone 4-5048) and the Nursing Supervisor (PIC# 1822) to report that the patient is presumed to have Eloped and to give a basic description, e.g., name, sex, age, and known distinguishing characteristics. The Shift Manager/Charge Nurse shall also provide information about the patient's medical condition, legal status (patient may be under a court order), etc.
3. The Medical Center Security Shift Commander shall notify the administrator-on-call of the Elopement.
4. The administrator-on-call shall review the situation and notify the Director of Patient Safety & Risk Management and/or the Chief Nursing Officer or Associate VP for Hospitals and Clinic Operations as needed.
5. The Medical Center Security Shift Commander shall immediately contact University police and shall implement standard operating procedures regarding Eloped patients. Security personnel may seek the assistance of other Medical Center personnel to search for the patient.
6. The Medical Center Security Shift Commander shall report to the unit to obtain additional information about the Eloped Patient.
7. The patient's family shall be notified in a manner determined to be appropriate by the Shift Manager/Charge Nurse in consultation with the patient's attending physician. Circumstances such as the patient's medical condition or an extended absence may warrant the notification of the administrator-on-call to assist the family while the search continues.
8. If after following the steps outlined above in Paragraphs E.2-7, and after continuing efforts to locate the patient, the patient has still not been found, Medical Center Security, in conjunction with the Chief Nursing Officer or the Associate VP for Hospitals and Clinic Operations, shall cause the search to be expanded to include applicable law enforcement agencies as described in the Security Department's standard operating procedure regarding Eloped Patients. If the patient appears to meet the criteria described in Section E.9.b below, the appropriate judicial detention and treatment order will be sought at the direction of the patient's physician with the assistance of the administrator-on-call.
9. Once found, the Eloped Patient shall be escorted back to the appropriate patient care area. If he/she is unwilling to return to the Medical Center, the following must be considered:
 - a. Application of [Medical Center Policy No. 0102 "Discharges Against Medical Advice"](#).
 - b. Application of [Medical Center Policy No. 0140 "Judicial Treatment Orders"](#), if the treating physician determines that the patient appears to be incapable of making an informed decision as a result of physical/mental illness or injury.
10. The events surrounding the patient's Elopement shall be documented in the patient's medical record. A Quality Report shall be completed.

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SIGNATURE:



R. Edward Howell, CEO, UVA Medical Center

DATE:

12/21/12

Medical Center Policy No. 0206 (R)
Approved October 1999
Revised June 2003, August 2003, December 2009, December 2012
Approved by Chief Nursing Officer
Approved by Medical Center Administration