



LINCOLN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER, INC.

1301 Fayetteville Street • P.O. Box 52119
Durham, North Carolina 27717 – 2119

SUBJECT: Chaperone Presence During Physical Examinations

APPROVAL DATE: 1/2017

REVISION DATE: 05/2022

REVIEWED DATE: 02/2019

PURPOSE

The use of a chaperone during physical exams has four benefits:

1. It helps to preserve patient dignity.
2. It provides reassurance to patients of the professional character of the exam.
3. A witness is available to support the provider's innocence should a misunderstanding arise, or a false accusation be made by the patient.
4. It offers advantages in convenience and time efficiency when health professionals serve as chaperones and can assist with procedures such as gynecologic examinations.

PROCEDURE

1. Staff will ensure that gowns, sheets and/or other appropriate apparel are available to protect patient dignity and decrease embarrassment to the patient while a thorough and professional examination is conducted.
2. Providers will individualize the approach to physical examinations so that each patient's apprehension, fear, and embarrassment are diminished as much as possible. The provider will explain the necessity of a complete physical examination, the components of that examination, and the purpose of disrobing in order to minimize the patient's possible misunderstanding.
3. The patient will be assured of adequate auditory and visual privacy and will never be asked to disrobe in the presence of the provider. Only if the patient needs assistance will a nursing staff member offer to be present in the room while the patient disrobes.
4. It is recommended that a third party (chaperone), a medical assistant or nurse, will be present in the exam room when a provider performs an examination of a patient's breast(s), genitalia or rectum. The provider may document in the EHR the name and job title of the chaperone.
5. The provider may determine, on an individual basis, whether and when it may be appropriate to honor a patient request to have no chaperone present in the exam room. In any event, this may be a red flag for potential misconduct or misunderstanding and should be an infrequent circumstance. The provider may document in the electronic health record (EHR) that the patient declined the presence of a chaperone.



LINCOLN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER, INC.

1301 Fayetteville Street • P.O. Box 52119
Durham, North Carolina 27717 – 2119

6. Staff will stock exam rooms with all items needed during the examination so that the chaperone will not need to leave the exam room during the examination in order to obtain supplies. The chaperone will attempt to not leave the room while the patient is in the lithotomy position unless the provider pauses the exam.
7. When there is a chaperone in the room during the examination, the provider ensures that there is opportunity for private conversation between patient and provider. The provider will keep sensitive inquiries and history taking to a minimum during the chaperoned examination.

Providers will be on the alert for inappropriate mannerisms or unprofessional behavior and should not permit a compromising situation to develop. Providers and staff will exercise professionalism, care, and sensitivity at all times.

REFERENCES:

Position Statements of the North Carolina Board of Medicine, Ethics and Professionalism: “Guidelines for avoiding misunderstandings during physical examinations” (Adopted May 1991; Amended June 2010)

PREPARED BY:  **DATE:** 5/13/22
Kristin Ito, MD, Chief Medical Officer

APPROVED BY: _____ **DATE:** 06/06/2022
Juliana Hodges, DNP, RN, CPNP-PC, Quality Improvement & Risk Management Director