



**Type:** Administrative  
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**Related Documents:**

### Preamble

Since time immemorial, Indigenous traditional medicines such as sage, sweetgrass, tobacco and cedar have been considered as sacred, cleansing, and protective plants. Sacred smoke created from burning medicinal plants is a practice common to many Indigenous peoples and known as “smudging” by many.

### Commitment Statement

Cultural awareness of Indigenous healing practices is one of the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. One of the Calls to Action asks for recognition of the value of Aboriginal healing practices, such as smudging, and for healthcare practitioners and leaders to collaborate with Indigenous residents and families who request the use of these practices in their care. Making accommodations for smudging is also in line with the province's Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which acknowledges the traditional use of tobacco (and other burnt consumable medicine plants) as part of Indigenous cultures and spirituality.

### Policy Statement

Smudging is a key component of wholistic plan of care for some residents, and/or their families and visitors of the Grey Bruce Hospice (GBH). Because mental and spiritual wellbeing are crucial aspects of a person’s overall care, provisions are made for smudging for anyone who requests it. If this procedure is followed, a safe, respectful ceremony should be able to be practiced by all.

#### 413.01 Supporting Indigenous Ceremonial Use of Smudging

When a resident or family/caregiver makes a request to a member of the RFC Team for a smudging to take place:

1. The RN/RPN assesses the resident’s condition to determine if there is any substantive concern about the impact of smudging on the resident’s physical safety. If it is determined that this would be the case, the RN will request support from the resident or family/caregiver to find a way to support this request in a safer manner. For examples, a safety concern is present when the resident is on high flow oxygen at the same time as the burning of traditional medicines occurs. Lighting the smudge outside the resident room, to alleviate open flame, and then temporarily limiting the use of oxygen during the ceremony is an option to accommodate the resident's and family/caregiver spiritual needs.
2. The Environmental Services Coordinator will contact the monitoring company to have the fire alarm system placed on “test” for a time period longer than the ceremony is expected to take or is responsible to call the monitoring company back after the ceremony to have the system put back on-line.
3. The alarm system will be placed in “signal bypass”, “auxiliary bypass” and “elevator bypass” modes.

This can only be done by the Environmental Services Coordinator as it is a password protected procedure.

4. The Environmental Services Coordinator must be able to be on site for the duration of the smudge, available to support virtually, or have trained the Fire Marshalls (RNs) to monitor the system. Because the monitoring company has put the system on “test”, in the event of an alarm in another part of the building, someone familiar with the alarm system must determine if 911 is to be called.
5. RN/RPN consults and communicates with adjacent residents and staff and advises that a Smudging Ceremony will be taking place. Consideration must be given to other employees and residents who may be allergic to smoke, or who prefer not to be exposed. Accommodation to smudge, as a ceremonial right, will be given preference to any individual preference or allergies for staff or residents with smoke.
6. Place signage on the resident room door indicating a smudge is taking place. The amount of material to be burned is to be kept to a minimum (4 or 5 buffalo sage leaves or similar amount of material) to protect the environment of the other residents and families within the building. The door into the hallway is to be kept closed with a towel or rolled up bedsheet placed at the bottom of the door to prevent smoke infiltration into the hallway. The patio door should be opened for ventilation.
7. As much “Smudging” as possible should be performed near the open patio door. The smudging of a bed bound resident should be kept as brief as possible. If it is possible move the resident bed closer to the patio door.

#### **413.02 Other Locations for Smudging**

1. The Clinical Administration Assistant Office is equipped with an alternate ventilation system for smudging.
2. Any smudging can be completed outside of the building, without any additional procedures, or without following the 9m rule away from doors (such as outside of the resident room or at the entry during an Honour Guard).

#### **414.02 Review Cycle**

Administrative Policies shall be reviewed in the even year.

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